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**The Role of Non-Human Creation  
in the Liturgical Feasts of the Eastern Orthodox Tradition:  
Towards an Orthodox Ecological Theology**

Christina M. Gschwandtner

**ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the role played by non-human creation in the liturgies for the feast of Holy Pascha (Easter), of the twelve major feasts of the Orthodox Church, and of the period of Great Lent. Applying to liturgical texts and practices the methodology developed by Paul Ricoeur for biblical interpretation, the thesis argues that the kind of world opened by these liturgies allows for the participation of non-human creatures in the liturgy and thus is amenable to an ecological theology. It investigates the implications of the liturgical texts for contemporary theological reflection about salvation, incarnation, sin, and theosis in light of the ecological crisis and the frequent Orthodox claim that the liturgy is ‘cosmic’ in scope. Chapter 1 looks at the role of non-human creation in the Paschal/Pentecost season and lays out the case for the need to include all of creation. Chapter 2 focuses on the feasts of the incarnation and argues for a more inclusive theological interpretation of the incarnation. Chapter 3 examines the liturgies of Lent and Holy Week and develops hamartiological implications of the ecological crisis. The final chapter focuses on the feasts of Theophany and the Transfiguration and proposes a view of theosis that extends beyond humans.

**The Role of Non-Human Creation  
in the Liturgical Feasts of the Eastern Orthodox Tradition:  
Towards an Orthodox Ecological Theology**

submitted in partial fulfilment  
for the Ph.D. degree in theology

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December 2011  
Viva on June 28, 2012

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- FC     *The Fathers of the Church*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press.  
LP     Carroll, Thomas K. and Halton, Thomas (1988) *Liturgical Practice in the Fathers*. Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier.  
NPNF *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Second Series. (1994) Schaff, P. and Wace, H. (eds) Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.  
PG     *Patrologia Graeca*. (1857-1866) Migne, J.P. (ed.) Paris: Migne.  
SC     *Sources chrétiennes*. Paris: Cerf.

[Patristic texts are cited by author only. For authors with multiple entries in the bibliography, editor/translator or date is listed as well.]

LITURGICAL TEXTS are quoted from the following English translations (according to the abbreviations explained below):

- Pentecostarion*. (1990) Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery.  
Ware, Kallistos and Mother Mary (trans.) (1998) *The Festal Menaion*. South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press.  
Ware, Kallistos and Mother Mary (trans.) (2002) *The Lenten Triodion*. South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press.

To shorten the references in citations from the liturgical texts, the name of the service is added only when necessary, thus all references to stichera, aposticha, and litya are to a vespers service and all references to odes are to a canon during a matins service (references to 'ikos' or 'sessional hymn' also refer to matins). When this is not the case, the required clarification has been added (e.g., matins stichera or compline canon). The numbers of the odes of the canon and the names of many feasts have also been abbreviated (for example, a reference to the third troparion of the fifth ode during the canon at matins for the feast of the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple is listed as 'Entry, O5' with the page number to the English translation). 'Nativity' always refers to the feast of the Nativity of Christ (Western Christmas), otherwise 'Nativity of Theotokos' is used. Although the original Greek texts have frequently been consulted, the existing English translations are employed in the text and page references are provided for them (see above). While Eastern usage is followed in the names of the feasts ('Nativity' not Christmas, 'Meeting' not Purification, 'Theophany' not Epiphany, 'Dormition' not Assumption), proper names of individuals have been spelled in accordance with the most common spelling in the secondary literature (thus 'Maximus' not 'Maximos'). 'Theotokos' is employed throughout to refer to Mary, the 'Mother of God'.

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*For Anna*



## INTRODUCTION

### IMPETUS

The ecological crisis—as expressed by many factors such as pollution of air, soil and water, deforestation, desertification, high rates of species loss and reaching its apex in global climate change which significantly exacerbates the other aspects—is becoming an increasingly pressing issue.<sup>1</sup> The subdiscipline of ecological theology has emerged as an attempt to formulate theological responses to this crisis and to take its implications seriously.<sup>2</sup> Eastern Orthodox engagement in this dialogue has been sporadic despite the reputation of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, the patriarch of Constantinople, as the ‘Green Patriarch’ and the recognition of Metropolitan of Pergamon and Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas that climate change is ‘probably the most serious problem facing humanity today’ (2010:399). Bartholomew has given many speeches and organised independent initiatives, bringing together scientists and theologians, focusing primarily on an ethical response to the crisis.<sup>3</sup> His core message is that the unique ‘ascetic and liturgical ethos’ of the Orthodox Church constitutes its specific contribution to the debate.<sup>4</sup> Yet he has not elaborated in any detail in what this contribution of Orthodox liturgy to ecological theology might consist besides repeatedly mentioning the phrase in the liturgy that exhorts the priest to offer up the Eucharist ‘on behalf of all and for all’.<sup>5</sup> Other Orthodox theologians have also reflected on ecological questions in the form of articles and conference discussions, although only one book-length treatment of the issue exists.<sup>6</sup> Most interestingly, Western theologians also often point to the East’s potential for providing ecologically-sensitive insight to the debate or for being generally more attuned to the natural world in its theology. Already White in his article on the origins of the ecological crisis exempted the Orthodox East from his condemnation of Western Christianity’s habits of desacralisation of nature and marriage of science and technology that he contended brought about the current crisis (1967). Other thinkers have pointed to Eastern theology’s supposed greater

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<sup>1</sup> That we are in such an ecological crisis is assumed in this thesis. For a brief review of the scientific data, see the introductions to many Western treatments of ecological theology, for example Breuilly & Palmer (1991), chapter 1 or Deane-Drummond (1996), chapter 1. For a good recent introduction to the science of climate change and the ethical issues surrounding it, see Garvey (2008). I am referring to the ‘ecological crisis’ in the singular because that has become the standard terminology, although one could certainly argue that there are a variety of ‘crises’ interacting with and exacerbating each other.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix I for a review of the literature in this field. The two appendices provide an overview of the literature in the two relevant fields and hence theoretically should be read before the thesis itself, since their insights and context are assumed in much of what follows.

<sup>3</sup> For his writings and speeches on these issues see the collections edited by John Chryssavgis (2003, 2008, 2009, to a lesser extent 2011, and especially 2012, which reprints many of the pieces collected in 2003).

<sup>4</sup> This point is made in most of his speeches (e.g., 2011:118, 270-271, 351; 2012:96-98, 125-127, 132-135).

<sup>5</sup> In fact, his homilies on liturgical occasions (see 2011:22-105) are disappointingly devoid of any references to non-human creation. He does often point to the institution of Sept. 1, the first day of the Orthodox Church year, as a day of ‘prayer for the environment’. Bartholomew’s predecessor Dimitrios dedicated this day in 1989 and the liturgical texts for it were composed by Father Gerasimos of Mount Athos.

<sup>6</sup> The most important collections are Gennadios (1990) and issue 10.3 of *Epiphany Journal* (1990). The most significant single source is Theokritoff (2009). She has also written several articles on the issue (1989, 1994, 2008). The Orthodox

cosmic scope (Nash, 1991:80), less problematic theory of atonement (Peacocke, 1993:430), greater sensitivity to animals and other creatures (Boff & Elizondo, 1995:46; Attfield, 1983:34), more sacramental attitude (Bradley, 1990:49) and other features judged to be less present in the West (Northcott, 2007; Palmer in Brümmer, 1991:141). It is not clear, however, that these apparently so positive features of Orthodox thought and attitudes have led to greater sensitivity to the environment in its practice or to any clearly articulated ecological theology (Lingas in Louth & Casiday, 2006:132).

This thesis is intended as a contribution to such an ecological theology, inspired by Bartholomew's appeal to the Orthodox 'liturgical ethos', by the (for the most part unelaborated) reference of many Orthodox thinkers to the 'cosmic dimension of the liturgy' and by the general conviction that liturgy is absolutely central to Orthodox thought and life and that any Orthodox theology must be firmly grounded in the liturgy.<sup>7</sup> It is thus also an attempt to bring together insights from the two emerging fields of ecological and liturgical theology. Both fields are pre-dominantly Western and a review of the current literature in both fields is found in Appendix I and II, respectively. While ecological theology provides the impetus and framing concern for the project, the sources studied are primarily liturgical. Each examination of liturgical texts and practices will ask: How are non-human creatures included within the liturgy and how might the theology arising out of the liturgy respond to their plight, especially in light of the ecological crisis? The overall frame and question thus is this pressing contemporary concern. At the same time, however, the thesis also proposes that the ecological crisis can become an occasion for thinking more deeply about the role and place of non-human creation theologically.<sup>8</sup> The attempt of a response to the current crisis thus may serve to help us consider a topic of theological significance that has not been sufficiently investigated in the past. The core questions the thesis tries to answer are: What does it mean to speak of 'cosmic liturgy'? How is the liturgy truly cosmic in scope, including all creatures and the entire cosmos in God's concern and redemption? And how might such a cosmic dimension make a genuine contribution to ecological theology and environmental practice?<sup>9</sup>

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conversation was in many ways precipitated by Sherrard's strong criticism of Western science and technology (especially 1987, but also 1998, 1990a, 1990b, 1992). See the review of Orthodox writings in the final section of Appendix I.

<sup>7</sup> This is a claim made by many Orthodox thinkers (e.g., Lash in Cunningham, 2008:37; Zizioulas, 1994:7; Getcha, 2007:65-80; Alfeyev, 2002:167; 2005:81-91; 2009:156, 206, 209). Alfeyev actually tries to apply this by drawing on liturgical texts for his analysis of Christ's descent into hell. Even within the ecological debate, Western writers recognise the emphasis placed on liturgy by the Orthodox, especially within the WCC process (Gosling, 1992:66, 102; Granberg-Michaelson, 1992:54; Duchrow & Liedke, 1989:164; Rasmussen in Hallman, 1994:125). Andronikof claims that '*the entire doctrine of the faith* is in fact recapitulated and meditated by the liturgy'. It is the 'centre' and 'foyer' 'where the entirety of theology converges. It is *the* "theological place" par excellence. Indeed, it is by its prayer that the Church expresses the most completely and most intensely what it believes. More exactly, when it prays, it sets forth its *faith*. *The liturgy is the developed Credo of the Church*' (1988:25, 26; emphases his). Later he affirms that 'liturgy is the *religious life* par excellence' and 'true theology' (41, 147). Bartholomew also asserts that 'liturgy forms the very heart of the Christian Church' (2011:367) and often emphasises its significance and authority (368).

<sup>8</sup> The designation 'non-human' creation is somewhat problematic since it defines creatures negatively as 'not human' thus still implying that humans are the norm. Some recent writings in ecological theology have used the term 'otherkind' instead (though this does not seem to escape negative connotations). While realising that the term is problematic I employ it here for all that has been excluded by a theological analysis that has focused exclusively on humans.

<sup>9</sup> Many liturgical theologians point to the importance of liturgy and ritual in shaping our lives. Torevell encapsulates this well when he says that 'to suggest that postmodern people do not indulge in and respond to "traditional" forms of ritual expression is untenable' (2000:202-203).

## CONTEXT

Although ecological theology is becoming an increasingly vibrant discourse, no study exists that grounds such a theology in liturgical texts and practices.<sup>10</sup> Some Western thinkers propose to develop new more ecologically oriented liturgies (McDonagh, 1990; Linzey, 1999b; Daneel in Hallman, 1994; Ackermann & Joyner in Ruether, 1996:127) and blessings of animals (predominantly companion species) are held on the feast day of St. Francis in some parishes. Its importance is acknowledged by some thinkers who deal predominantly with other topics (Deane-Drummond, 1996:83-85; Fox in Barnes, 1994:68; McFague, 2001:198). There are no Orthodox writings on this topic except for the general reference made by many to the human task of ‘lifting up’ creation in the liturgy.<sup>11</sup> In other respects, the field of ecological theology is wide and deep (as reviewed in Appendix I). The questions raised by other emphases will obviously be kept in mind throughout this study, but they will here be addressed within a liturgical framework.

In a wider sense, the topic of this thesis touches on the current dialogue between science and religion. However, a concern for ecology or the environment has not been as prominent as other topics in such discussions.<sup>12</sup> In fact, while science and religion are often seen as opposed to each other and thus much conversation circles around these apparent centres of contention—especially evolutionary biology, emergence and demise of the universe, and more recently neuroscience and bioethics—Christianity is often seen as linked to the environmental crisis, as having made common cause with science and technology on this particular issue, even as having actively supported exploitation of the planet (White, 1967; Santmire, 1985). Obviously, ecological theology cannot simply ignore science, since ecology is deeply embedded in larger scientific insight about the functioning of the universe and thus connects with and assumes many of the insights of physics and biology. It is not possible to disconnect ecology from evolution, as some theologians try to do. Science must be taken seriously, if we really want to address the impact of our actions on the natural world.

Yet, this is not a contribution to the science and religion dialogue per se. I do not aim to show how the different claims of science and religion might be ‘reconciled’ from a presumably ‘neutral’ third standpoint. Rather, it is an attempt to formulate an ecological *theology* (where the discipline is theology, not ecology or something between the two), but a theology that does not ignore the insights we have gained from science about human origins and that of other animal species or of the planet and the larger universe. Thus while this thesis does not engage in ‘dialogue’ with science per se (for which I do not have the expertise), underlying it is a definite commitment to take seriously the knowledge about life and the human which now belong to the worldview of any educated person and cannot be simply ignored in theological discourse, if it is to be taken seriously in the 21st century. This is not merely an attempt to be ‘relevant’—a term that unfortunately is often used pejoratively especially by Orthodox to dismiss ‘liberal’ or ‘contemporary’ theology seen as abandoning truth and tradition for the sake of relevance—but it is a desire to explore a question which matters profoundly

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<sup>10</sup> There are two studies that attempt to establish a dialogue between liturgy and ecology in a general sense (Mick, 1997; Stewart, 2011). There is also a working group on ‘ecology and liturgy’ at the North American Academy of Liturgy.

<sup>11</sup> Theokritoff does devote one chapter of her book to creation in Orthodox worship (2009:155-180).

<sup>12</sup> The Templeton Foundation which funds much of this dialogue seems curiously uninterested if not actively hostile to environmental questions.

theologically, even if it were not for its tremendous implications for how we treat our planet and its fellow inhabitants: namely, the status and role of this earth and all of its creatures in God's redemptive purposes. While the Christian tradition has always affirmed that God created and has often also stressed the goodness of this creation, especially in response to Gnostic and Manichean attempts to argue otherwise, non-human creation or the material world have not generally played a role in other theological doctrines. There has been very little discussion about whether animals or plants are or will be redeemed and what that would mean.

The strongest positive consideration of matter has generally been in the sacraments (and in the East in the defence of icons), but even there matter is given such consideration for the sake and the salvation of humans.<sup>13</sup> Even creation as a whole is often considered in a purely utilitarian sense by the tradition: everything is created for the human and for human use. Theology usually has been unabashedly anthropocentric (even in arguments that it is theocentric this God seems primarily if not exclusively concerned with humans). God becomes human, God creates only humans in the divine image, Christ dies for and as a human, is raised as a human and ascends as a human. Only humans are saved and eschatological hope is for humans. Even if there is a 'new' heaven and earth (and even if that is posited as a 'recreation' of *this* heaven and earth) very little if any thought is expended for what this may mean for the actual creatures on this planet. They simply do not count or matter in the theological scheme of things. God cares about humans, not about insects or fish or trees and certainly not about rocks or rivers (except maybe to use them as loci for revelation to humans or symbols for their salvation).<sup>14</sup>

This has generally led Christians, including theologians, to be just as happily oblivious of the earth and their impact on it. Christians do not necessarily pollute and ravage the earth *more* than non-Christians, but they certainly do not do so any *less*. And while there are exceptional stories about the love of individual saints for animals or the natural world—St. Francis, some Celtic saints, St. Silouan—these stories are few and far between and neither are they typical nor have they affected how theology is conducted or with whom it is concerned.<sup>15</sup> And of course on some level this makes perfect sense: theology is written by humans and therefore from a human perspective and driven by human concerns. It would be hubris to think we could write from the perspective of a bear or a beaver and understand their particular role in the realm of salvation—and surely bear or beaver would not be particularly interested in consulting such a work for their conduct or self-understanding. And yet the exclusively anthropocentric perspective of our theologies does have serious implications for other creatures precisely because of our almost complete silence about them. It not only means that they do not seem to matter in themselves, but also that they do not matter to *us*, that we are absolutely distinct from them and have no need even to be aware of them in our converse with God. We can

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<sup>13</sup> There has indeed been some attempt to develop theological thinking on the environment in light of these two affirmations of materiality: sacraments (Theokritoff, 2009:181-210 and 1996; George in Limouris, 1990; Efthimiou in Hallman, 1994:92-95) and icons (Chrysavgis, 1999). Bartholomew also frequently comments on both topics. Since these two topics have already been explored, I do not consider them explicitly in this thesis (primarily for reasons of space), although they are obviously both linked to liturgical experience. The sacraments are frequently mentioned in discussions of ecological theology by both Western and Eastern theologians.

<sup>14</sup> Many of these assumptions are now challenged by ecological theologians (see Appendix I).

<sup>15</sup> Some of these stories are collected by Waddell (1934), Bratton (1993), and Stefanatos (1991, 2001).

think of our ‘salvation’ or ‘redemption’ and ‘sanctification’ and even our ‘sin’ entirely without them.<sup>16</sup> This seems dangerously Gnostic and denies our material embeddedness in (not to speak of genetic connection with and nutritive dependence on) other creatures and nature as a whole. Theologians have a responsibility to address the detrimental effect on the rest of life on this planet, which such a discourse of exteriority and distinctiveness has produced or at least permitted. This thesis seeks to take seriously this exclusion of non-human creatures from theological discourse and to address it from a liturgical perspective.

## METHODOLOGY

As its methodology the thesis employs the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur. Liturgical texts and practices, just like biblical texts, require interpretation, especially when one seeks to have such interpretation speak to contemporary concerns. Ricoeur, more than any other thinker, has developed such a theory of interpretation that wants to hear the texts as fully and faithfully as possible and yet understand them to be deeply conversant with current concerns and the horizon of the contemporary audience.<sup>17</sup> Ricoeur’s work also continually seeks to bridge the gap between text and action; his hermeneutic theory applies to practices as much as to texts. Ricoeur, a French Protestant philosopher, has focused his hermeneutic work primarily on philosophical and biblical texts and has little to say about liturgy. Yet, especially his biblical hermeneutics is eminently applicable to liturgy, as is evident by the use of his philosophical insights by several liturgical theologians (Nichols, 1994; Zimmerman, 1988, 1993, 1999; to some extent also Hughes, 2003). Since a full review of Western liturgical theology is provided in Appendix II, this introduction will show primarily how his methodology is appropriate and useful for Orthodox thinking about liturgy and for the concerns of this thesis in particular.<sup>18</sup>

The fundamental assumption of hermeneutic theory is that all texts require interpretation and that the effort of interpretation must pose itself anew for each audience and interpreter. A text can never be approached completely without presuppositions; texts are always already interpreted. Thus texts speak anew and differently to each new reader or listener. This is particularly true of liturgy, which although fixed in texts (at least in the Orthodox tradition) is always performed and practised and thus heard anew and differently by each person entering the liturgical act. Some hermeneutic thinkers (most prominently Hans-Georg Gadamer) speak of this in terms of horizons: the horizon of the text or performance opens to and even merges with the particular horizon of the contemporary interpreter (Gadamer, 1989:305).<sup>19</sup> These theories of interpretation

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<sup>16</sup> Occasionally it seems that this is true even in regard to creation, as some theologians seem quite happy to embrace an evolutionary process for the creation of the universe and the emergence of plant and animal life, but still posit a special creation or at least transformation for human emergence, which apparently needs special divine attention and intervention.

<sup>17</sup> This helps prevent the ‘temptation to “use” worship as a tool to promote a political and social agenda’ of which Mick warns in his reflections on liturgy and ecology (1997:72).

<sup>18</sup> I have developed this much more fully (especially in reference to Western liturgical theology) in my article ‘Toward a Ricoeurian Hermeneutics of Liturgy’ forthcoming in *Worship*.

<sup>19</sup> Ricoeur is critical of Gadamer’s idea that horizons can fuse, but does not disagree with the general assumption of horizons. He prefers to speak instead of the ‘world of the text’ intersecting with the ‘world of the interpreter’ (see especially the earlier essays in 1991).

hence recognise that even the most ancient texts can be heard in new contexts and thus be confronted with contemporary concerns. The ecological crisis in all its ramifications is the particular horizon brought to bear on the liturgical horizon in this study. While Orthodoxy has not always been noted for its openness to contemporary issues (Bartholomew and some contemporary theologians are important exceptions in this respect), even the traditional mystagogies (Maximus, Germanos, Cabasilas) presuppose that liturgy is meaningful and must be interpreted in order to convey and make clear its meaning to the contemporary audience.<sup>20</sup> And the entire discipline of homiletics operates under the same assumption: the homilist attempts to convey the meaning of the liturgical occasion to his audience.<sup>21</sup>

Ricoeur employs the language of horizons less and instead speaks of ‘the world of the text’ (developed in 1984-88 and 1991). Texts open a world to their readers that they invite them to inhabit (1995:43, 232). This world of the text challenges the assumptions of the readers and calls them to a different way of life. The world that is projected is a future world, a world of possibilities that becomes real as the readers or listeners enter within it and make it their own (1995:43, 223). Thus the truth of these texts in Ricoeur’s view is ‘poetic’ in character (ποίησις means a ‘making’ or ‘creating’). Instead of corresponding to or describing a current state of affairs (as does the truth or language of science), these texts create a world, envision it as a reality that is to be made real (1995:222).<sup>22</sup> While Ricoeur applies these insights primarily to biblical and literary texts, they are eminently applicable to the nature of liturgy. And while liturgical theologians do not explicitly use Ricoeur’s language, since the work of Alexander Schmemmann they now consistently speak of the ‘eschatological dimension’ of the liturgy. Schmemmann was critical of traditional explications of liturgy in purely anamnestic fashion (as ‘remembering’ or recreating Christ’s life on earth in mimetic fashion) and argued instead that the liturgy opens ‘entry into the kingdom’: as we participate in liturgy we are invited to enter the kingdom and to make the kingdom on earth (1973, 1986, 1987).<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Kavanagh’s well-known phrase that ‘liturgy is doing the world as it was supposed to be done’ conveys the primary thrust of liturgy as transforming the world into the vision presented by the liturgy.<sup>24</sup> This is precisely what Ricoeur presents as the challenge of the world of the text to its audience.

<sup>20</sup> Taft points out, in fact, that ancient methods of biblical interpretation were consistently applied to liturgical texts and demonstrates this in particular for Germanos’ mystagogy (1980-1981:45-75). He says that ‘mystagogy is to liturgy what exegesis is to Scripture. It is no wonder, then, that the commentators on the liturgy used a method inherited from the older tradition of biblical exegesis’ (59) and goes on to show how that is true for Germanos’ text.

<sup>21</sup> All the ancient homilists were male (as are practically all contemporary Orthodox preachers), as the priesthood is limited to men in the Orthodox tradition. The language used of human beings and of God is also predominantly if not exclusively male. While this is a very important issue in its own right, it is not one that can be explored in this thesis. I have made every attempt to be more inclusive in my own writing, although I have not altered quotations.

<sup>22</sup> Joost van Rossum speaks of the truth of liturgy in very similar fashion: ‘Liturgy is based on history... But at the same time it belongs to the domain of poetry. At times the poetic language and the images and symbols express the content of the faith of the Church better than historical language’ (2007:156-157).

<sup>23</sup> Of course, both anamnestic and eschatological dimensions are always present in liturgy, as Andronikof argues: The liturgy has a double function, ‘on the one hand, it actualises the *past* in the consciousness of the liturgists and it makes the past alive again for them. On the other hand, it actualises within it the spiritual value in and for the present economy of the Church. Doing this, it projects this revealed and salvific past toward the *promised future*. In this way, it anticipates or “inaugurates” this future’ (1988:44). This dual dimension of liturgy is now acknowledged by most contemporary liturgical scholars (e.g., Méliá, 1982:129).

<sup>24</sup> This phrase appears frequently in his book (1984) and becomes a central tenet in David Fagerberg’s work (2004).

Yet Ricoeur also provides an interpretative methodology for such a world, something not always linked explicitly by liturgical theologians to the insight that liturgy is both anamnestic and eschatological in character. Ricoeur argues that biblical texts employ various literary measures, such as symbolism, a polyphony of genres, and excessive language characterised by what he calls ‘limit-expressions’. In his early work on myth and symbolism (1967), Ricoeur frequently speaks of the mythical and symbolic language of Scripture. By this he does not imply that such language is untrue or purely fictional. Rather, myth refers to the framework of meaning that narratives convey and within which we order our lives (1967:163, 236-237). Powerful myths convey correspondingly richer meaning, appropriated by larger groups of people. It does so through the symbols which express its central truths. Symbols communicate a truth that is too complex and rich to be stated in statements of facts (1967:354). Symbols convey a multiplicity of meanings. And while the scientific enterprise, which has become in many cases our paradigm for truth, has often shattered our initial naïve belief in the myth and its symbols, we can recover their power and truth in a second naïveté which recognises the more profound truth at work in the symbol that goes beyond the simplistic truths of correspondence to facts and realises that the original truth of the symbol can be reappropriated in new interpretations (1967:348). To speak of the myth or symbolism of Scripture or liturgy thus is not to proclaim its untruth but rather to explore the rich world of a more profound truth about our lives in the world that still speaks to us today without rejecting the real insights of science about the physical world as subject to scientific investigation. The two truths are not incompatible but different and complementary (although Ricoeur does not reject conflict and disagreement, which are always present and should not be denied; instead such struggle can lead us to greater insight). The liturgical world is rich in myth and symbolism. Ricoeur’s work helps us realise that the ‘mythical’ and symbolic nature of liturgical texts and practices can be embraced as conveying the depth of its truth (instead of connoting an untruth to be rejected as childish or naïve). Liturgy opens a mythical world, with a wealth of symbols, which it invites us to inhabit and to make our own, while not denying or leaving behind our twenty-first century experiences and insights.

The poetic world opened by the Scriptures is characterised by what Ricoeur calls ‘polyphony’: the confluence of many and varied voices (1995:144-199, 217-235). This is evident especially through the many genres united in Scripture which often conflict with each other, such as narrative, prophecy, wisdom literature, and so forth—each presents God in a different and at times contradictory fashion (217-235). It is precisely this conflict and multiplicity that enables meaning and truth to emerge through the struggle of competing meanings. Liturgy is similarly constituted by many different kinds of genres. In fact, the Scripture read within the liturgy is itself one of these genres heard together with litanies, canons, antiphons, and other ‘voices’. There are also layers of historical development, often bringing together sources from different traditions and environments.<sup>25</sup> Another aspect of the poetic language of the Scriptural world is its excessive nature. Scripture frequently employs extreme statements or what Ricoeur calls a ‘logic of super-abundance’ (1995:315-329). This logic pushes us to the limit through the use of hyperbole and ‘limit-expressions’ (1995:228-235, 279-

288). The extreme language conveys the challenge of the biblical world and is part of its poetic and eschatological character. Liturgical language is often even more hyperbolic and abounds in excessive statements. This excess is not merely poetic license but indeed communicates something significant about the nature of the reality it attempts to convey and the style appropriate for doing so. Thus expressions of extreme sinfulness or the heights of elation are a feature of the kind of liturgical world opened by the particular occasion. Thus, in each chapter, the type of language and symbolism of the particular liturgies under investigation will be examined to explore the kind of world opened by their language.

Finally, Ricoeur always insists that text and action, narrative and life are closely linked (1985:260-271). Texts arise out of life and in turn influence life.<sup>26</sup> Many actions mirror texts and texts depict actions (1991:125-222). We make sense of our lives by providing coherent narratives (1992:32). Yet, Ricoeur also points out that such narratives are continually disrupted by the vicissitudes of life. Narratives, in fact, play an important role in helping us deal with the complexity and chaos of our lives and to enable us to formulate meaning and coherence out of our struggles. He describes this as an interplay between concordance and discordance (1992). The texts themselves often convey this continual conflict between chaos and coherence. Liturgy is similarly characterised by such struggle for meaning in the face of the challenges of the world around us. The ecological crisis is one such particularly pressing concern, which confronts us and calls for our response. Liturgy, this thesis contends, can help by providing a ‘narrative’ framework that takes seriously such conflict and yet allows meaning to emerge within it and thus enables us to respond through concrete action. Liturgy does not remain at the level of text, but is already performed as action within the liturgical context and shapes the actions of those who carry it into the world around them: liturgy, as Schmemmann insisted, is ‘for the life of the world’ (1973).

## SCOPE

The normal Sunday morning liturgy (i.e. the ‘divine liturgy’) does not vary much from Sunday to Sunday. The most significant theological shaping of the liturgical experience instead is found in the great feasts of the liturgical year and in its cycle itself, marked most profoundly by the period of Lent leading up to the ‘feast of feasts’, Great and Holy Pascha. Indeed, Schmemmann contends that Christianity is ‘best understood through its joys and feasts rather than through abstract dogmatic and theological formulas. Since its earliest days, Christianity, and the Orthodox Church in particular, expressed and embodied its faith, its understanding of the world and its approach to life, through a network of feasts embracing the entire year. Without exaggeration, we can say that the believer lives from feast to feast, and that for him these feasts beautify all time through the comings and goings of each season of the year’ (1994:19). Since Pascha is the apex of Orthodox liturgy and theology and also the earliest documented Christian celebration, the first chapter

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<sup>25</sup> This is particularly evident in the liturgy for Holy Week which combines traditions from Jerusalem, Constantinople, and various monastic settings. See discussion in chapters 1 and 3.

<sup>26</sup> He articulates this in terms of three mimetic (‘imitative’) stages: mimesis 1 (life’s prefiguration of narrative), mimesis 2 (narrative configuration), mimesis 3 (refiguration of life in light of narrative). This is laid out most fully in his three-volume work *Time and Narrative* (1984-88).



will focus on the period from Pascha to Pentecost and the question of soteriology, probably the most central question of Christian faith. It will explore the world opened by this supremely festal season and ask whether its message of salvation is directed only at humans or whether it includes non-human creatures as well. The second chapter will explore the feasts of the Theotokos and of the Nativity of Christ, all feasts that focus on the incarnation. It will explore whether Christ's becoming human has any relevance for the larger material world and its creatures. The third chapter focuses on the Lenten cycle and considers questions of hamartiology: What do sin and repentance, as they emerge in the consciousness of the experience of Lent, mean in a world in ecological crisis? The thesis will conclude with particular attention to the feasts of Theophany and Transfiguration, which convey most explicitly the Orthodox belief in theosis (deification) and which are also the feasts in which non-human creation is most fully present. The chapter will thus serve to bring together the insights of the previous three chapters and to confirm them in the 'worlds' opened by these two feasts.

Each chapter will begin by employing the hermeneutic methodology, asking the following questions: What is the world opened by this liturgy? How is the experience of these festal liturgies shaped by symbolism, polyphony, and limit-expressions? How does it convey the conflict between concordance and discordance? What is the central meaning conveyed by these feasts? To what actions do these liturgies move their participants? (This last question is often best answered by looking at homilies that exhort their listeners to actions or describe expected conduct in light of the feast. Patristic homilies will also serve as an important source in this investigation, as they provide much information about the 'world' of the liturgy and its participants.) Each chapter will then examine to what extent non-human creatures are already present in these liturgies: How is the liturgy cosmic in scope and how might that be evident in the Patristic world in which it was celebrated? (The treatment will again draw also on Patristic homilies for the respective feasts as evidence.) The third part of each chapter will raise the ecological question more explicitly: What conflicts are presented by the meeting of worlds of traditional interpretations and the insights reached by ecological theology in its reflection on the crisis? How do non-human creatures seem excluded or adversely affected by the focus of the liturgical drama on humans? How might the hints of inclusion in the liturgical texts and practices and the ancient homilies be made much more fully explicit in an interpretation that robustly includes all God's creatures in the cosmic praise and invites a kingdom to come that redeems the entire cosmos—human and non-human? What are the real implications for human action in the world today that would apply such a redemptive vision to our concrete treatment of our planet and all its inhabitants? (For this final section I will interact especially with contemporary theological texts, but draw on the insights gained from the earlier discussion of the Patristic sources.)

It must be made very clear at the outset, however, that this project is an attempt to *develop* an ecological theology, *not a claim that such a theology already exists* within the liturgy or the Patristic literature. For obvious reasons, the primary concern in liturgy and homilies is clearly with humans. The liturgy is sung and performed by humans; the homilies were preached to human beings, not to birds or trees, and thus necessarily seek to respond to human concerns. Non-human creation appears only at the margins. Yet when it

does appear, its mention is often significant. It should always be kept in mind throughout this examination that the references especially to Patristic homilies are highly selective and constitute only a very minute part of the respective homily or of a particular preacher. The overall concern of preaching is always with the divine-human relationship and this must be kept in mind in this analysis continually in order to avoid reading a contemporary ecological concern back into the Patristic texts (homiletic or liturgical). This was simply not a question that ever posed itself to them and while there may well have been ecological exploitation and devastation in some areas, as humans have always affected the environment in which they lived, the scope and scale of such use of the ground was very different indeed. The closest we get to any such concern is in the impact certain practices had on the poor. But even in that case the concern is exclusively with human beings. Patristic homilies are used here not to prove any latent ecology in their thought, but rather, on the one hand, to confirm what kind of world they saw opened for their congregations by the liturgical feast and, on the other hand, for the role non-human creation may have played (probably unconsciously) in their understanding in order to enable us to perceive a direction into which an ecological theology *might* be developed. To see such a theology already present in their thought is deeply anachronistic.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **‘Trampling Down Death by Death’: From Pascha to Pentecost**

#### 1.0 Introduction

Pascha was the first Christian feast to be observed by the early Christians and originally celebrated the entire mystery of Christ (annunciation, birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension) in one feast, patterned on the Jewish Passover.<sup>27</sup> The temporal link with Pesach was often interpreted quite literally, leading to various ‘Easter controversies’ in the early centuries regarding the dating (when it was not always easy to determine when the 14 Nisan would fall) and later the day of the week (whether to celebrate on the 14 Nisan or on the following Sunday). Quartodeciman beliefs persisted for several centuries.<sup>28</sup> Slowly the one day celebration became the Paschal Triduum, a three-day celebration of Christ’s death and resurrection that included a preparatory fast on Friday and Saturday (a full Lenten period developed in the fourth century). Pentecost, as the fifty-day season following Pascha was initially called although now referring primarily to the feast on the fiftieth day, also had its parallel in the Jewish Pentecost (or feast of weeks) and thus emerged fairly early.<sup>29</sup> Although the feasts of the Nativity or of Theophany also began to be celebrated early on (see next chapter), Pascha always remained by far the most important Christian feast and most fundamentally determined Christian identity from a liturgical standpoint. This is also why Pascha will be treated first here, although the Orthodox liturgical year begins in September and a ‘chronological’ examination might more logically begin with the nativity or the annunciation.<sup>30</sup> Pascha is not only historically the first feast, it is the feast of feasts, and conveys the most central message of the Christian faith.<sup>31</sup> Christ, the incarnate Son of God, has overcome the

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<sup>27</sup> For background on the emergence of Pascha and the Paschal season, see Talley (1991), Bradshaw (2002), Johnson (2000:97-261), Meßner (2001), Pott (153-195). For an older source that includes many translations of early texts (but is a bit dated in regard to historical issues) see Carroll & Halton (1988, especially chapters 3-5). When this is used as a source for translations of Patristic texts it will be cited within the text as LP.

<sup>28</sup> Comings comments on their presence in Cappadocia (2005, especially chapter 2). Photius also mentions a group of Quartodecimans in a ninth century homily (XVII; Mango, 1958:279, 282).

<sup>29</sup> The accounts of the pilgrim Egeria seem to indicate the celebration of ascension on Pentecost Sunday, although she also mentions a celebration on the fortieth day in Bethlehem (in Wilkinson, 1999:79). Regan, relying on Devos, speculates that this is a celebration of the slaughter of the innocents, which happened to fall on the fortieth day after Pascha in the particular year for which Egeria is assumed to report the liturgical events (in Johnson, 2000:239).

<sup>30</sup> This and the third chapter thus roughly correspond to the two great liturgical books: the *Pentecostarion* (in this chapter) and the *Lenten Triodion* (chapter 3). The *Lenten Triodion* stops when the procession exits the church at midnight on Holy Saturday and the *Pentecostarion* immediately picks up with the procession arriving in front of the church doors at the beginning of Paschal Matins. This division is somewhat artificial, as in practice there is no interruption in the service and theologically the crucifixion, Holy Saturday, and Pascha belong together as a unit. In fact, until the eleventh century the *Lenten Triodion* and the *Pentecostarion* (called the *Flowery Triodion* in the Slavonic tradition) were printed together and many Russian books still begin the *Pentecostarion* on Lazarus Saturday (thus each of the two service books contains nine weeks; Ware, 2002:14; Getcha, 2009:28). I will hence also refer back to Holy Week in this chapter whenever appropriate, instead of resigning all of it to chapter 3.

<sup>31</sup> In fact, Behr has contended (2006) that a linear version of salvation history, which proceeds from creation through incarnation and the cross to the eschaton, is an invention of modern theology and disregards how the Patristic sources treat the mystery of Christ. He argues strongly for the centrality of Christ’s death and resurrection in Patristic thought and claims that it determines everything else (including reflection about creation).

powers of death and evil and brought the world back to life. This emphasis on life is absolutely central to the feast.

### 1.1 'World' opened by liturgy

The feast of feasts, great and holy Pascha, begins at midnight in front of the church doors. Here the priest first proclaims the joyous message that 'Christ is risen' to which all respond 'he is risen indeed'. Then the Paschal troparion is sung: 'Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs bestowing life'. This troparion and the Paschal greeting will be repeated over and over in the next forty days in all services. As the doors are opened, the church is ablaze with light and richly decorated with flowers.<sup>32</sup> The priests and altar servers wear bright silver-white vestments in which the abundance of light is reflected.<sup>33</sup> Truly this is 'the night that shines brighter than the day'.<sup>34</sup> The people are also dressed festively and hold lit candles. As Paschal matins begins the music becomes fast-paced and high-pitched. This is the only time in the year that basically the entire service is sung (instead of certain texts being only read or chanted). At every ode of the canon the priest or deacon censes the church and people anew, repeatedly crying 'Christ is risen' to which all the people respond. The mood is one of joyous celebration and in most parishes will continue with a feast even after liturgy ends.<sup>35</sup> The liturgical texts forcefully emphasise the message of the troparion, conveying most fundamentally that death is overcome in Christ's resurrection and that life has dawned. This message is reinforced by the Paschal icon, which shows Christ emerging from the realm of the dead pulling Adam and Eve up with him. This is the message of the Paschal 'world' of the liturgy: great joy at the overcoming of death through Christ.

Yet Pascha is not purely anamnestic in character although the memory of Christ's death soon became an important part of its celebration, especially through the association of the holy sites in Jerusalem with Gospel readings and re-enactment or commemoration of the events of Holy Week. From the very beginning the focus of Pascha was also the transformation of believers in light of the joyous message of the resurrection

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<sup>32</sup> Decoration of churches and houses at Pascha goes back to the earliest centuries. The introduction to Leontius' homilies claims that 'at Easter it was apparently the custom in Constantinople to decorate the windows, gateways and doors of houses with festoons of oil- and wax-lights (IX.3). At Easter too, Leontius expects his congregation to sing psalms at home (VIII.3)' (Allen:12).

<sup>33</sup> In some traditions the colours for Pascha include red or are even predominantly red.

<sup>34</sup> A paschal homily attributed (falsely) to Hippolytus stresses this emphasis on light. He contends that 'life is extended to all beings and all beings are filled with a great light; the Orient of orients occupies the universe, and he who was "before the morning star" and before the stars, the immense and immortal, the great Christ shines on all beings more than the sun' (SC28:116). That is why the mystical day of Pascha is celebrated as a long and eternal day of light which is not extinguished.

<sup>35</sup> Bulgakov describes this Paschal joy in his introduction to Orthodoxy: 'Holy Week is the heart of Orthodox rites. It may be said that it is anticipated and prepared for during the whole year. Great are the joy and beauty of the services of the great feasts—as the Annunciation, Christmas, the Epiphany, Pentecost, the Assumption—but all the services pale before the beauty of the grandiose rites of Lent and above all of Holy Week. And the luminaries themselves pale, as stars of the night before the light of the rising sun, before the light and the joy of the night of Easter. The resurrection of Christ is a high festival in the whole Christian world, but nowhere is it so luminous as in Orthodoxy, and nowhere—I dare add—is it celebrated as in Russia, just at the moment when spring begins with all its sweetness and transparency. The night of Easter, its joy, its exaltation, transport us to the life to come, in new joy, the joy of joys, a joy without end' (1935:152-53).

and thus concerned with the *present* experience of the faith (Johnson, 2000:23). The liturgical texts frequently employ the word σήμερον (today): ‘*Today* salvation has come to the world [Σήμερον σωον σωτηρία τῷ κόσμῳ]’ (O4), ‘*today* I arise with Thee’ (O3) or ‘a sacred Pascha has been show forth to us *today*’ (Praises). The liturgical texts throughout focus on the present celebration: ‘This is the day of resurrection; let us be radiant, oh peoples’ (O1) or ‘Dance *now* [νῦν] and be glad and exult O Theotokos in the rising of your son’ (O9). While the references to Christ’s death and resurrection are of course in the past tense, as commemoration of this event, much of the text is in the present tense, making clear that the celebration is happening now, that new life has dawned here and now, for us as we celebrate. The homily of St. John Chrysostom that is always read during the Paschal liturgy (there is no other preaching) reinforces this. It welcomes anyone to the feast, those who have fasted strenuously and prepared themselves for weeks and those who have not managed to fast at all and have come ‘at the very last hour’. Everyone is to ‘enter into the joy of our Lord’. ‘Rich and poor, join hands together; sober and heedless, honour this day; those who fast and those who do not, be glad. The table is full: eat sumptuously... let all enjoy the banquet of Faith’. Probably the most well-known passages stem from two Paschal homilies by Gregory Nazianzen that were used almost literally in the composition of the later liturgical texts: ‘Yesterday I was crucified with Christ; today I will be glorified with Him. Yesterday I died with Christ; today I will return to life with Him. Yesterday I was buried with Christ; today I will rise with Him from the tomb... Become like Christ, since Christ has become like us. Become gods for Him since He became man for us. He has become inferior to make us superior; He has become poor to enrich us by His poverty; He has taken the condition of a slave to procure freedom for us; He has come on earth to bring us to heaven’ (2, PG35.397; LP:112). Gregory stresses the present implications of Christ’s resurrection, which transforms our lives today: ‘Today salvation has come upon the world... Christ is risen... rise with Him. Christ is freed from the tomb... be freed from the bond of sin. The old Adam is dead... the new is risen. Rise in Christ... be a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). This is the Lord’s Passover, the Passover; again, I say Passover: The Passover of the Father: The Passover of the Holy Spirit—Feast of feasts and solemnity of solemnities’ (45; LP:113). Schmemmann also highlights this present dimension of the feast: Pascha ‘is not the remembrance of an event in the past. It is the real encounter in happiness and joy, with him whom our hearts long ago knew and encountered as the life and light of all light. Easter night testifies that Christ is alive and with us, and that we are alive with him. The entire celebration is an invitation to look at the world and life, and to behold the dawning of the mystical day of the Kingdom of light’ (1994:122). Our present celebration of the feast appropriates the resurrection event and its implications for our own lives, previewing the eschatological life that is promised us in Christ. Past and future meet in the present.

## 1.2 Symbolism, Polyphony, Limit-Expressions

The language of Pascha abounds in superlatives. Everything contributes to it as a limit-experience. The contrast between a week of intense fasting and long services with the celebration of Pascha and Bright Week (the week of Pascha), including the abundance of food; the dark colours and solemn tunes of Holy Week with the bright vestments, abundance of light, and joyful music of Pascha; the darkness of the church

during nocturnes with the brightness of light during matins; the celebration at midnight into the dawn of the new day. This is 'a sacred Pascha, a new and holy Pascha, a mystic Pascha, a spotless Pascha, a great Pascha, a Pascha that hallows all the faithful' (Praises). The homily reinforces the superlative message through repetition: 'Christ is risen and hell is overthrown. Christ is risen and the demons are fallen. Christ is risen and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen and life reigns. Christ is risen and there are no dead in the tombs. Christ is risen from the dead and became the first-fruits of those asleep' (37). Everything about Pascha is excessive and the contrast to Lent and Holy Week makes it even more superlative. Its liminality is reinforced by the sense that it does not really belong to the yearly cycle as one feast among others. Rather, like the 'eighth day' it is the 'feast of feasts' that is not bound to time and space. The fact that it moves every year instead of having a fixed day in the calendar contributes to this special status. All other moveable feasts and days depend for their dating on Pascha (e.g., the beginning of Lent, Ascension, Pentecost, even the length of the fast of Sts. Peter and Paul). The first Sunday after Pascha every year begins anew the cycle of tones.<sup>36</sup> Pascha moves us from the darkness of night and death into the light of life and resurrection. The Scriptural readings further reinforce this message. The reading for Pascha is the prologue of John, which is contrasted with Genesis 1 as the first of the fifteen OT readings on Holy Saturday. Pascha is a new creation, a new beginning. On Bright Monday (in the Russian tradition), all four resurrection gospels are read in a procession around the church, one facing each geographical direction: East, South, West, and North.

There are also some elements of discordance. Chrysostom acknowledges in his homily that there may be some who have not fasted and thus not prepared themselves properly. Occasionally during the Paschal season our sin and inadequacy before God are mentioned, although that theme appears far more subdued than the rest of the year. These images conflict to some extent with the joyous message of Paschal life and show the tension between 'already' and 'not yet'. The practice of fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays is resumed after Bright Week in most traditions. All doors of the iconostasis stand wide open for the entire week of Pascha, but they are shut again before St. Thomas Sunday begins. The tension between death and resurrection is still present despite the exorbitant joy of Pascha. Thus although the eschaton breaks in the most clearly and the most fully at Pascha, it is not yet completely present.

Pascha is also rich in symbolism. Light, bright colours, flowers and music play a dominant role. The open doors of the iconostasis symbolise the openness of the kingdom, the invitation extended to all. Baptisms and chrismations of converts usually happen on Pascha (although they can also take place on Lazarus Saturday, on Pentecost or on Theophany and in the case of infants at almost any time of year). The rich symbolism of baptism reinforces the message of death and resurrection, redemption and new life which Pascha conveys. Another important symbol, closely connected to baptism, is that of water. Many of the post-

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<sup>36</sup> In fact, the whole week of Pascha is removed from the usual cycle. Every day is in some sense a Sunday and the tones are used consecutively during Bright Week instead of singing in the same tone all week. This would not be apparent to most parishioners, as few parishes have liturgy every day of Bright week (though many have at least a Monday and often also a Tuesday liturgy).

Paschal Sundays mention water in some form.<sup>37</sup> A contemporary catechism for children presents the Sundays following Pascha as reflections on baptism (Aslanoff, 2002:171). The paralytic is healed by a pool, the conversation with the Samaritan woman takes place by a well, the blind man is told to wash his eyes at the pool of Siloam. Water thus becomes a life-giving theme reinforcing the message of life already so strong in the Paschal story. Even the water that flowed out of Christ's side after his death is interpreted as life-giving: 'Thou wast pierced in Thy life-creating side, O Christ, and Thou didst cause Thine immaculate Blood and the precious Water to flow forth as an ever-living fount for the world' (Myrrhbearers, O9, 127). The Mid-Feast speaks most explicitly of water, as its main text is Christ's preaching about himself as living water at a feast: 'At Mid-feast give Thou my thirsty soul to drink of the waters of piety; for Thou, O Saviour, didst cry out to all: Whosoever is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Wherefore, O Well-spring of life, Christ our God, glory be to Thee' (Vespers, Dismissal Hymn, 190). Christ's various miracles involving water are interpreted as renewal: 'Thou didst show a wonder by changing the water into wine, O Master, Who didst change the rivers of Egypt into blood. Thou didst also raise up the dead, accomplishing this sign in these latter times. Glory be to Thine ineffable counsel, O Saviour; glory be to Thy self-abasement, whereby Thou hast renewed us' (O1, 191; also O3, 192). The theme of water is continued on the following Sunday which focuses on Christ's meeting with the Samaritan Woman at the well, where the conversation again focuses on living water: 'By Jacob's Well, Jesus found the Samaritan woman. He that covereth the earth with clouds asked water of her. O wonder! He that rideth on the Cherubim speaketh with a harlot woman. He asked for water, Who suspended the earth upon the waters. He seeketh water, Who causeth springs and pools of waters to flow forth' (Stichera, 218). Water is also associated with the Holy Spirit: 'By the Holy Spirit, the streams of grace gush forth, watering all creation unto the begetting of life' (Matins, Ascent, 224). The life-giving power of water thus becomes an important symbolism of the larger theme of the restoration of life.

### 1.3 Actions

If the 'world' opened by Pascha is one of life overcoming death, what are its mimetic functions? How is this world meant to affect us and lead us to action? Liturgically speaking the overwhelming consequence of Pascha is celebration, joy and gratitude. Already Gregory of Nyssa depicts this joy of the feast: 'The whole night we have heard psalms, hymns and spiritual songs resonate. It was like a river of joy which ran via our ears into our soul and filled us with joyous hopes. Our heart finally, charmed by what we heard, by what we saw, was marked with an ineffable joy, guided toward the invisible by the display before our eyes' (PG46.681, LP:117). Penitential actions, such as fasting and kneeling, are suspended or even forbidden and not resumed until Pentecost.<sup>38</sup> The most dramatic lifestyle changes, however, are connected to the reception of converts

<sup>37</sup> Getcha also comments on several blessings of waters during Paschal week: 'In the Greek ordo, one does a procession Monday or Tuesday of Pascha and one celebrates the blessing of waters in order to signify the participation of sensible creation in the mystery of the Resurrection' (2009:266). In Russia this is done on Friday (267); another 'small blessing of waters' happens after liturgy on the feast of Mid-Pentecost in Russia (285).

<sup>38</sup> Canon 20 of the first council of Nicea regulates: 'Since there are some who kneel on Sunday and during the season of Pentecost, this holy synod decrees that, so that the same observances may be maintained in every diocese, one should

which usually occurred on Pascha. In the fourth century the newly baptised wore white garments for a week and in many places (Jerusalem, Constantinople, Antioch) listened to mystagogical lectures that introduced them to the mysteries of the Christian faith.<sup>39</sup> They were also exhorted to a fundamentally changed lifestyle beyond their church attendance, which included abstaining from the orgies of pagan feasts (or the races) and care for the poor. John Chrysostom's homilies are full of such moral exhortations.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, Cyril of Jerusalem admonishes his listeners frequently to banish 'vain ornament' and various luxuries and instead to practise prayer, good works and the 'sanctification' of their bodies.<sup>41</sup> The renunciation of the devil at the baptismal liturgy is understood as renunciation of any sort of sinful actions and dedication to a new and different lifestyle.<sup>42</sup> John Chrysostom depicts the special grace and purity of the neophytes in superlative terms, frequently asking for their special intercession on his behalf before God.<sup>43</sup> Often these lectures were also attended by other members of the congregation and when the number of converts became fewer and fewer, Bright Week became a time of reaffirming one's baptism and rededicating oneself to a faithful Christian life.

Some of the homilies are accompanied by admonitions about the proper manner of feasting, which should not lead to drunken excesses. Leontius exhorts his congregation in a Paschal homily to celebrate 'not by running into inns but by hastening to sanctuaries; not by honouring drunkenness but by loving moderation' (VIII.3, 106).<sup>44</sup> He also comments on the festal clothing worn during Pascha, condemning the Sabbatians who celebrated Pascha on a different date and thus were not clothed appropriately (IX.3, 114).<sup>45</sup> Similarly, he exhorts his audience in one of the first homilies for the day of Mid-Pentecost to free slaves rather than indulge in luxuries (X.36, 135). Philaret of Moscow also warns about the various amusements associated with Pascha: 'Will you not perhaps, after witnessing a sacred, heavenly, divine spectacle, go in search of low, worldly sights wherein some plaything, or what is still worse some player, will play with the attention of your mind, the emotions of your heart,—and where sensuality, folly, vice under various guises, will dispute with each other for your time, your praises, your money,—perhaps the very money you refused to a beggar... I counsel and entreat you, not to wither away hereafter the joy, so reverently honoured at the beginning. Is it right to convert into an amusement and pastime, that joy which was won for us through sacrifice and suffering?'

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offer one's prayer to the Lord standing' (in Tanner, 1990:16). Pentecost vespers includes 'kneeling prayers' which reintroduce the mood of repentance and awareness of death.

<sup>39</sup> See Egeria's description of this practice (in Wilkinson, 1999:161-162) and the various catechetical and mystagogical lectures from this time by Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Ambrose of Milan.

<sup>40</sup> This is a theme of almost every catechetical lecture (SC50). Lecture VI in particular rails against those who have gone off to the circus instead of attending the lecture (presumably other members of the congregation not the neophytes themselves). Such exhortations are not limited to catechetical homilies, but are found frequently throughout Chrysostom's work. (See chapter three on Lent.)

<sup>41</sup> For example at the end of Lecture XII. Several of the others conclude in a similar fashion.

<sup>42</sup> See Cyril's first mystagogical lecture where he interprets this activity. In the fifth lecture he compares the washing of hands during the Eucharistic liturgy as a symbol that one 'ought to be pure from all sinful and unlawful deeds' and exhorts his audience to 'purity and blamelessness of conduct' (V.1). Some contemporary scholars attribute these lectures to his follower John.

<sup>43</sup> See the end of his Second Discourse (SC50:147). He mentions this fairly frequently in these lectures.

<sup>44</sup> In a homily on Lazarus Leontius exhorts his congregation to remember the poor and stresses that during Holy Week we should cleanse ourselves of defilement and feed the poor (III.18-19, 57).



(1873:99). Gregory Nazianzen in a homily on ‘new Sunday’<sup>46</sup> first describes the reason for the feast, namely that God suffered for us so that we might be saved and become a new creation (44.4, Daley:157). Then he goes on to exhort his congregation to practise charity and care for the poor:

Do not despise tears—you who have suffered things worthy of many tears, and who then received mercy. Do not send a poor person away—you who have been enriched by divinity; and if you cannot be generous, at least do not grow rich at the expense of the poor, for even that is a great deal to ask from people with an insatiable appetite. Do not show disrespect towards the stranger—you for whom Christ became a stranger when we were all strangers and aliens to him, lest you be estranged from Paradise as in the beginning. Share your roof and your walls and your food with the person in need. Do not love wealth, unless it is a way of helping the poor. Forgive, for your have been forgiven; have mercy, because you have received mercy; earn kindness with kindness, while there is still time. Let your whole life, the whole way that you walk each day, be renewed! (44.7, 159)

Thus Pascha was indeed thought to have concrete implications for behaviour in terms of (appropriate) celebration, renewing of baptismal vows, and especially care for the poor. The new life that the feast celebrates so abundantly must be exemplified in the conduct of the people celebrating it.

## 2. How is creation already present?

The benefits of Pascha and Pentecost are thought to be primarily if not exclusively for human beings. ‘Those in the tombs’, on whom Christ ‘bestows life’, are human corpses. The Spirit descends on humans at Pentecost. And the various Paschal Sundays focus on encounters with humans: Thomas, the myrrhbearers, the paralytic, the Samaritan woman. The concern of liturgy in general is focused on the human participants in the liturgy and on the benefits that accrue to them in its course. Of course, one may well say that the Trinitarian God is the primary focus of liturgy and that its fundamental point is praise of God. While that is certainly true, liturgy always approaches God from a human position, celebrates the divine encounter with humans, and imagines its impact on the human participants. There is little if any explicit concern for non-human beings (with the possible exception of angels who are mentioned fairly frequently). Yet, it is not equally clear that this anthropocentric focus excludes non-human beings entirely. And, in fact, at times non-human creatures are mentioned in a fashion that presupposes their presence and takes for granted that the events commemorated and celebrated by the liturgy concern them as well and thus extend beyond humans only. All of creation participates in some sense in the liturgical drama of salvation. What place does creation have in the celebration of Pascha? Unlike some of the other feasts, Pascha has few explicit textual references to non-human creation. The most obvious ones are the grief of various parts of creation at the crucifixion and its rejoicing at the resurrection. Redemption is also affirmed repeatedly to be for ‘all the world’ but it is not always made clear whether this refers to more than just ‘all humans’.<sup>47</sup> Yet, the larger symbolism of Pascha is more inclusive of the rest of creation, especially in the association of Pascha with the renewal of life in spring.

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<sup>45</sup> Yet, he recognises that some of the poor members of the parish may not be able to afford beautiful clothes (IX.4, 114).

<sup>46</sup> This refers to the first Sunday after Pascha, now called St. Thomas Sunday. Gregory’s homily was given in honour of a local saint (Mamas) in a church dedicated to him.

<sup>47</sup> The emphasis on humans is very strong in the Paschal liturgy and thus it is likely that the plain meaning of ‘world’ primarily extends the references to all human beings (the liturgy often speaks of ‘the whole inhabited earth/world’, which presumably refers to humans only). See below.

## 2.1 Horror at the crucifixion

The liturgy of Holy Saturday is probably the most explicit about the role of non-human creation, maybe because humans fail so utterly at recognising its weight and horror. The trembling of the earth and darkening of the sun, as reported by the Gospels, is taken as creation's reacting in horror to the crucifixion.<sup>48</sup> Both homilists and hymn writers affirm repeatedly that all of creation mourns on Holy Saturday. This is reiterated during the Paschal season: 'The beams of the sun withdrew themselves in fear before the sufferings of Christ, and the dead arose, and the mountains shook, and the earth trembled, and Hades was laid bare' (Myrrhbearers, O8, 125). Similar statements are made on the Sunday of the Paralytic (O3, 166) and the Blind Man (O7, 282). Sky and earth, mountains and rocks, trees and other plants react visibly to the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ. This is repeated frequently, especially during Holy Week.<sup>49</sup> Already Melito of Sardis in one of the earliest Paschal homilies comments on it (SC123:97). He contrasts the lack of trembling and visible reaction by the people with the earth's trembling and the outrage of the heavens. Romanos in a hymn on Holy Thursday similarly asks: 'What earth has supported such audacity? What sea has endured the spectacle of this sacrilege? How has the sky resisted, the ether subsisted, how could the universe continue to exist' (SC128:70) when Christ was sold and condemned?<sup>50</sup> In the hymn on the Passion, he suggests that the entire creation trembles before the passion of the Creator (SC128:204).<sup>51</sup> Leontius expresses horror at the fact that his congregation is more interested in the circus than in Holy Saturday by appealing to the reaction of creation: 'Today creation is in mourning, because the Creator of all things is being outraged, and are you spending your time in drunkenness and in intoxication and in pursuits which are at variance with this?' (VI.3, 82). Hesychius of Jerusalem in a homily on the purification interprets the 'spear' that will pass through Mary's soul in terms of the crucifixion and comments on the reaction of nature: 'The people cried: "Crucify him", but the rocks, not being able to support the weight of blasphemy, split' (I.8, 41).<sup>52</sup> Proclus of Constantinople is probably the most explicit about this reaction of nature and returns to it again and again: 'Therefore, just as in the case of a royal death all the joyous radiance of the cities is banished,/thus also today the whole creation denied its own joyous radiance./*Heaven* clothed itself in the black garment of darkness./The *sun*, like a slave loving his master, fled, having drawn in its rays./The *stars* brought their natural

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<sup>48</sup> The Gospel references are actually very brief. Matthew reports that 'the earth shook and the rocks were split' (Matt. 27:51) and also comments on the darkness (although without mentioning any heavenly bodies explicitly). Mark only mentions darkness (Mark 15:33). Luke says that 'the sun's light failed' (Luke 23:44-45), but otherwise makes no reference to an earthquake or other natural disaster. John does not mention any natural occurrence at the crucifixion, not even any darkness. The liturgy expands these references dramatically by portraying them as an active mourning and expression of horror on the part of creation.

<sup>49</sup> Between the first week of Lent and Pentecost, there are over thirty references to this 'reaction' of sky, earth, and the sun, most of them on Holy Friday and Saturday. These include graphic descriptions such as groaning and weeping, astonishment, fear, trembling, horror. By no means is the phrasing always identical.

<sup>50</sup> In his hymn on Mary at the Cross, Romanos has Christ predict the earth's violent reaction at the crucifixion and warn his mother not to be frightened when this happens (SC128:183-85).

<sup>51</sup> Earlier in the same hymn he addresses sky, earth, and sun directly, calling upon them to respond to the horror of the crucifixion.

<sup>52</sup> He describes this reaction in much more detail in his homily on Andrew (VII.4, 247).

order into disarray./The *temple* rent its cloak in sorrow./The *earth*, wailing, did not strike her arms, but cleft the rocks' (11.3, 160; see also 29.2, 163).<sup>53</sup> Similarly, Asterius of Amasea exclaims:

As a lamp on a lampstand, the cross, He was extinguished./and as the sun He rose from the tomb./It was possible to see a double wonder:/When Christ was crucified the day was darkened/and when He rose the night was as bright as day./Why was the sun darkened?/Because it had been written concerning Christ:/Darkness He made a veil to surround him./Why was the night as bright as day? Because the prophet had said to Him, Darkness would not be darkness to you, night would be as light as day (Ps. 139:12)./O night more splendid than day. O night more brilliant than the sun./O night, whiter than snow./O night, more gleaming than lightening./O night, more delightful than paradise./O night, delivered from darkness./O night, filled with light. (PG40.436; LP:80)

Thus various elements of the natural creation, mostly ones we presume to be inanimate, visibly respond to Christ's suffering. They are portrayed as more empathetic and more sensitive to the import of the event than the human characters in the story. Furthermore, it is also suggested that Christ's death affects them in some direct way and consequently that his resurrection may well also have concrete implications for non-human creatures and the earth.

Similar statements are made about Christ's rest in the tomb on Holy Saturday.<sup>54</sup> Epiphanius mentions earth's silence on Holy Saturday (PG43.461; LP:234-35). Similarly in a homily on Holy Saturday, Amphilochius of Iconium comments on creation's suffering and mourning at the crucifixion (PG39.89; LP:235, 236). The liturgy will later portray Holy Saturday as a 'great and holy Sabbath' or the 'sabbath of sabbaths' where everything rests with God as on the first sabbath of creation.<sup>55</sup> Holy Saturday is thus also a recapitulation of the creation, just as Pascha is portrayed as a new creation: 'Today Thou dost keep holy the seventh day, which Thou hast blessed of old by resting from Thy works. Thou bringest all things into being and Thou makest all things new, observing the sabbath of rest, my Saviour, and restoring Thy strength' (O4, 648).<sup>56</sup> The first sticheron for the Praises expresses the same idea in a beautiful paradox: 'Today a tomb holds Him who holds the creation in the hollow of His hand; a stone covers Him who covered the heavens with glory. Life sleeps and hell trembles, and Adam is set free from his bonds. Glory to Thy dispensation, whereby Thou hast accomplished all things, granting us an eternal Sabbath, Thy most holy Resurrection from the dead' (652). Although again the benefit of this Sabbath is applied primarily to humans (especially Adam), it is always set within the larger context of creation.

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<sup>53</sup> In a different homily Proclus directly addresses sun, heaven, earth, and temple, and asks them why they responded the way they did. They reply as follows: 'The whole of creation answers without a voice, saying: "In sorrow we proclaimed the Lord./We bewailed not the suffering of a fellow-servant,/but shuddered at the insolence directed at the Lord."/Heaven calls out:/ "It was God who became man,/and was crucified in the flesh,/and as God bent me and descended."/The *sun* calls out:/ "It was my Lord who was crucified in the flesh./For I, in fear of the light of his divinity, drew in my rays."/The *earth* called out:/ "It was the Creator, carrying flesh, who was crucified in the flesh./For though I embraced the flesh in the manger,/yet I did not limit the power of his divinity."/And the *sea* calls out:/ "It was not my fellow-servant who was crucified in the flesh./For the feet of my fellow-servant Peter were heavy on my back,/but the feet of the Lord sanctified my nature."/ He concludes by asking: 'But do you not believe the elements?' (13.4, 174). It is interesting that Proclus here explicitly imagines the natural world to speak (albeit without a voice) since many contemporary Orthodox (as we will see in the next chapter) are adamant that humans are needed to give a voice to creation and interpret this as our primary ecological role. It seems that at the crucifixion the reverse is true, creation has to speak on behalf of humans.

<sup>54</sup> The celebration of Holy Saturday as more than an interlude between Holy Friday and Pascha is comparatively late. There are far fewer homilies for Holy Saturday than for other occasions.

<sup>55</sup> The liturgy here also imagines the sun trembling and darkening its light because Christ lies in the tomb (Second Stasis, 638). The whole creation 'offers a funeral hymn to the Creator' (Third Stasis, 640).

<sup>56</sup> The Kontakion also repeats this theme: 'This is the most blessed Sabbath on which Christ sleeps' (649).

## 2.2 Celebration

The other prominent role for non-human creation is the reverse of its response to Christ's death, namely its celebration of the resurrection. A sticheron on Holy Monday connects the two: 'O Christ, Who by Thy Passion didst darken the sun, and Who by the light of Thy Resurrection didst make all things radiant with joy, accept our evening hymn, O Friend of man' (Apostichon, 45).<sup>57</sup> At all the major feasts of the Paschal period (Pascha, Ascension, Pentecost), creation is assigned a role of praise. The entire creation rejoices at the resurrection and the coming of the Spirit. This is particularly clear at Pascha and during Bright Week: 'For meet it is that the Heavens should rejoice, and that the earth (γῆ) should be glad, and that the whole world (κόσμος), both visible and invisible should keep the feast; for Christ, our everlasting Joy, hath arisen' (O1, 28); 'Now all things (νῦν πάντα) are filled with light; Heaven and earth (γῆ), and the nethermost regions of the earth (καταχθόνια). Let all creation (κτίσις), therefore, celebrate the arising of Christ, whereby it is established' (O3, 29). On Holy Monday: 'Every breath and all creation glorify Thee, O Lord; for by the Cross didst Thou abolish death, that Thou mightest show forth unto the peoples Thy Resurrection from the dead, since Thou alone art the Friend of man' (Stichera, 43). On Tuesday: 'All things are filled with gladness, having received the proof of the Resurrection... For Thou didst arise from the dead, granting salvation to the race of man, that all creation might glorify Thee, the only sinless One' (Stichera, 45). On Wednesday: 'by Thine arising, Thou hast filled all things with joy' (Stichera, 48). 'Let the heavens be glad, let all creation celebrate; the Lord is risen and hath appeared unto all His wise Apostles' (Samaritan, O4, 230). Heavens, earth, and all of creation participate actively in the joy of Pascha. They rejoice on behalf of the liberation of Adam, but also on their own behalf. The texts suggest that all of creation is freed from death and corruption. Christ says to the women: 'Hearken, ye women, and give ear unto the voice of joy, for I have trampled down tyrant Hades and raised the world from corruption (φθορᾶς ἐξήγειρα κόσμον). Hasten ye quickly and proclaim the gladsome tidings to My friends; for I have willed that joy shine forth thence upon all My creation (τὸ πλάσμα μου) from whence there first came forth sorrow' (Myrrhbearers, Exapostilarion, 128).<sup>58</sup> The idea that redemption extends to non-human creation will be examined more fully below.

The homilists are less explicit about this role of creation, but some do mention it. A visible response of the earth, similar to Holy Friday, is also associated with the resurrection (something like an earthquake is already indicated in some of the Gospel accounts). Romanos refers to this in one of his resurrection kontakia.<sup>59</sup> Proclus repeatedly comments on the rejoicing of creation at the resurrection, drawing on various

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<sup>57</sup> The term *philanthropos*, friend of man or lover of humankind, is frequently used of God (especially by Romanos). Many stichera and troparia end with this term to the point where it almost serves as a poetic 'filler' (there are some other popular phrases that are used very frequently and are probably simply 'stock phrases' of liturgical poetry).

<sup>58</sup> It is not entirely clear, however, that 'all my creation' here really refers to non-human creation. It may well be shorthand for saying 'all humans' or 'all my human creatures'.

<sup>59</sup> Third Hymn on the Resurrection (SC128:469). In his Hymn on Ten Coins he says: 'The stone was not an obstacle for my coming forth, since the entire universe obeys me and is submitted to me like its God. In having become flesh, I am the Creator and lord of the universe, and on a sign from me, the sea became similar to firm earth; the Jordan opened a path; in the desert, springs came forth for the people, and the sun recoiled when it saw me crucified, the Life and the Resurrection' (SC128:597).

biblical texts to do so (29.3, 163 and 12.2, 169). Indeed, as the liturgy says ‘through the cross joy has come to the whole world’ (31), therefore: ‘Let all the earth worship Thee and chant unto Thee; let them chant unto Thy Name, O Most High’ (First Antiphon, 39). As will become clear in the analysis of other feasts, the liturgical texts consistently see creation involved in God’s praise. The theme of the praise of all of creation is by far the strongest role for creation both in liturgical texts and in the ancient homilies. The Fathers can affirm that inanimate and animate creatures—from mountains to trees to sun and moon—praise God and respond to the suffering and resurrection of Christ. All of creation participates to some extent (albeit a limited one) in the liturgical praise of the people. This is clearer in texts than in actions, although the decoration of churches with flowers and branches for feast days might serve as a further illustration of all nature participating in some sense in the joy of the liturgy. At the same time we must admit, however, that plants and non-human animals seem to join in praise on behalf of humans or of God not on their own behalf. Rarely does the drama of redemption seem *directly* applied to them. Yet, they have a strong interest in its implications for human beings, to the point that Proclus portrays the earth as mourning for her children and rejoicing in their redemption.<sup>60</sup> Earth and heaven take an active part in responding to Christ’s death and resurrection and they do so more visibly and more consistently than the human actors in the story. Thus they can serve as examples to teach us how to respond to the Paschal mystery.<sup>61</sup> Certainly they are not excluded from it entirely.

### 2.3 Paradise opens

One reason for this rejoicing of creation is the re-opening of paradise: ‘All things have been enlightened by Thy Resurrection, O Lord, and paradise is opened again; and, whilst acclaiming Thee, the whole of creation doth ever offer praise to Thee’ (Stichera, 44; repeated on several occasions throughout the Pentecost season). Paradise is a common theme in the celebration of Pascha. In fact, often the very point of the crucifixion and resurrection seems to be the fact that paradise is now again opened. This opening of paradise constitutes a reunification of heaven and earth: ‘Thou wast crucified; Thou didst rise; Thou didst raise the dead with Thyself, and didst open paradise to the race of man. Thus, Thou, our Life, by Thy mighty power, didst utterly vanquish death and didst verily unite things of earth with things Heavenly’ (Second Friday, Praises, 98). An early Anatolian homily concerned with justifying the date of Pascha strongly employs recapitulation language in regard to the re-opening of paradise (SC48:139). Gregory of Nyssa expresses the joy of the feast and links it to our redemption from paradise. In light of this he invites his listeners to imitate the example of mountains and valleys, which skip and sing with joy at this message (PG46.681, LP:117-118).

Pascha is thus envisioned as the overcoming of a split (maybe represented by hell)<sup>62</sup> that has been introduced between heaven and earth. Christ’s death and resurrection reunites these two spheres. This is

<sup>60</sup> See especially his homily for Ascension cited in the next section.

<sup>61</sup> Theokritoff also points this out in more general terms without applying it specifically to the festal liturgies (2009:156-167).

<sup>62</sup> The opening of paradise is often joined with the vanquishing of death, something both liturgical texts and homilists imagine vividly, frequently personifying Death, Hades, Satan and various other sinister figures. The gates of hell are opened by Christ’s death and all the dead are allowed to exit. (See chapter three.)

particularly clear in the liturgies for Ascension, where Christ's ascension into heaven with an earthly and fleshly body brings the two back together. Again here both earthly and heavenly creatures are portrayed as rejoicing and even dancing because of this unification: 'The earth mystically danceth, and the Heavens are filled with joy on the Ascension of Christ, Who by grace hath united the things which were formerly separated, and Who hath destroyed the wall of enmity' (Prefeast, O1, 303). Similarly at the feast of the Ascension itself: 'The Lord of all radiantly went up with glory unto His beginningless Father; all creation doth now celebrate and doth dance for joy' (O6, 308). This bringing together of heaven and earth mainly refers to Christ's human nature ascending to heaven and the Spirit descending (at Pentecost) to the earth.<sup>63</sup> Yet, the ascension also effects a renewal of the whole earth: 'O Lord, by Thy Passion and Thy Resurrection Thou didst renew the world, which had grown old in many sins; and riding upon a cloud, thou didst ascend into the Heavens' (O1, 330). Again, it is reiterated that all of creation rejoices at this unification of heaven and earth: 'The earth doth celebrate and dance for joy, and Heaven doth rejoice today on the Ascension of the Maker of creation, Who by His volition clearly united that which was separated' (O3, 331).<sup>64</sup> The festal kontakion itself stresses this unification: 'When Thou hadst fulfilled Thy dispensation for our sakes, uniting things on earth with the Heavens, Thou didst arise in glory, O Christ our God, departing not hence, but remaining inseparable from us and crying unto them that love Thee: I am with you, and no one can be against you' (334). Christ does not simply leave the earth, but rather brings earth and heaven together and unites them.

In a homily on the Ascension, Proclus also stresses the overcoming of the separation between heaven and earth: 'The nature of creation is distributed in heaven and on earth,/but the grace of today, having bridged the division of these things,/does not permit me to see the division./For who would in future say that heaven is separated from things on earth,/seeing that my image reigns below as well as above?' (21.1, 193).<sup>65</sup> He continues with a long depiction of earth's mourning at the disasters of her human children. While her pain begins to be alleviated at Christ's coming, it 'reverts to sorrow' at the crucifixion: 'The sun suffered together with the ills of the earth;/heaven felt a sharing pain, and doffed her cloak of radiant joy/and put on darkness like a coarse cloth of mourning' (21.2, 194-95). He continues depicting the reactions of this maternal earth to the apex of the resurrection: 'The earth, then, in the grip of such misfortunes,/and having remained bereft of all good hope,/and finally led astray by the lamentations on behalf of nature,/suddenly sees the appearance of an unspeakable joy, which no-one could take from her:/the Second Adam, the immeasurable light of glory, shining brightly from Hades' (21.3, 195). Ascension completes this 'bridging' of the division between heaven and earth.

Andronikof also stresses that the ascension has 'universal import' and is 'extended to the entirety of the created, from cosmic matter to incorporeal spirits' (1988:248). He contends that Christ's human body

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<sup>63</sup> There are numerous references to Christ's flesh in the liturgical texts (Ascension, Stichera, 323-24; Entreaty, 326; O4, 332).

<sup>64</sup> Again on Seventh Monday: 'Thou didst ascend in glory. The things of Heaven didst Thou unite with the things of earth' (Aposticha, 376).

which ascends to heaven ‘establishes an organic link between heaven and earth’ (249). In a different text he affirms that earth and heaven are joined in ‘their cosmic liturgy’ at the Ascension. It enables earth to reflect and ‘bear’ heaven (1985:228, 237). Schmemmann strongly emphasises that the Ascension is about life here and now, that ‘heaven is not somewhere in outer space beyond the planets, or in some unknown galaxy’. Rather, ‘heaven permeates our life here and now, the earth itself becomes a reflection, a mirror image of heavenly beauty’ (1994:149, 150). Bulgakov in a homily on the Ascension instead speaks of its import in terms of a ‘blessing’ of creation: ‘In ascending, the Lord left the world and the human race different from what they had been when He descended to them. The earth then had been the accursed earth, and the human race had been the offspring of wrath. But this earth carried Him, saw his Transfiguration, preserved Him for three days within its depths, and was illuminated by His Resurrection.’ Because of this the creation is now blessed: ‘The Lord ascended, blessing: He blessed His disciples and, in their persons, the entire human race. He blessed the earth and the waters, the air and all other natural things. And this blessing *reposes* upon the world, which is saved, redeemed, and once again blessed. The world *remembers and preserves* this blessing’ (2008a:125; emphasis his). Thus, for Schmemmann and Bulgakov, as for Proclus, the Ascension has real significance for the earth. It overcomes the ancient separation and relieves the Adamic curse. Earth becomes blessed again.

## 2.4 Newness

Many homilies stress that the resurrection makes everything new, including the non-human creation. Indeed newness is one of the central themes of Pascha, exemplified especially in the neophytes’ newness of life.<sup>65</sup> Yet this affirmation of newness is actually often extended to all of creation. Proclus affirms: ‘*Heaven* is new, which he who descended, blessed with his ascension./*Earth* is new, which he who was born in the manger in the flesh, sanctified./*The sea* is new, that held up feet/which flesh did not engender, nor sin weigh down./*Life* is new, which he delivered from war, and filled with calmness./*Mankind* is new, which he cleansed through water, and tested with the fire of the Spirit./*Worship* is new, for no longer is it burnt sacrifice and circumcision,/but faith which is made manifest, and which glorifies in worship three persons in one essence’ (13.2, 171-72).<sup>67</sup> Another early Paschal homily says: ‘You have come... not to restore a part of the earth, but to renew the entire world’ (SC146:67). This is repeatedly emphasised by the liturgical texts themselves: ‘Today the whole creation is glad and doth rejoice, for Christ is risen, and Hades has been despoiled’ (Megalyntarion, 33, repeated several times).<sup>68</sup> It is also affirmed at Pentecost: ‘Blessed art Thou, O Renewer of the whole world’ (O7, 413). This newness effects reconciliation where before there was separation: ‘And creation, once

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<sup>65</sup> He stresses the close bond between earth and heaven also in another homily: ‘The earthly things were united with the heavenly,/angels serve mankind/and the world has received deliverance from sins./Christ has risen/and Death was destroyed/and the devil disgraced’ (31.5, 178).

<sup>66</sup> Cyril emphasises this repeatedly in his mystagogical lectures (as do most other homilists who give such lectures).

<sup>67</sup> The creation imagery is even more explicit and extensive in his Homily 15 (on Pascha) which comments on the Gospel reading for that day from John 1. Basil of Seleucia, in his third homily on Pascha, speaks of Christ saving the world and liberating the earth (SC187:209); everything is now renewed (213). He recounts all the benefits of salvation including ‘a principle of purification for the world, a renewing of nature’. Pascha regenerates everything (SC187:215).

<sup>68</sup> An early homily attributed (probably falsely) to Origen also stresses this newness by pointing out that Pascha is celebrated at the beginning of the year (SC36:58).

alienated, but now reconciled, Doth praise Thee, the Blessed One' (O8, 414). The renewing and illumination at Pentecost is a work of the Spirit: 'The Father is Light; the Word is Light; and the Holy Spirit is Light, Who was sent to the Apostles in the form of fiery tongues; and thus through Him all creation is illumined and guided to worship the Holy Trinity' (Exapostilarion, 416). The frequent references to 'all of creation' suggest that creation participates in the transfiguration effected by the resurrection. Bulgakov claims this explicitly in a homily on Pentecost: 'At Pentecost the sons of Israel erected tabernacles of wood; and even now Christians bring into churches flowers, greenery of grass, and branches of trees. Through this vegetation, all of nature participates in the event that took place in the temple of the upper room on Mount Zion; all of nature participates in Pentecost. All creatures await, according to the words of the Apostle, the revelation of the glory of the sons of men; they await the transfiguration into a new heaven and new earth, the cosmic Pentecost' (2008a:130).<sup>69</sup>

This 'cosmic' dimension, of which Bulgakov here speaks in regard to Pentecost, is illustrated particularly well by the strong link many of the ancient texts establish between the Paschal season and spring. The association of the new life in Christ with the new life in creation at spring (obviously only in the northern hemisphere) was made early and very frequently.<sup>70</sup> It is particularly evident in an early Paschal homily which wonders about the association of Pascha with the first month and refers to a secret Hebrew tradition 'which says that in this month God, the artist of creation and the Creator of all, conceived His universe. It was among the first blooms, in the full beauty of the world, they say, that the sculptor saw His statue come to life, graceful, exactly as He had desired. They invoke the serenity of the heavens, the sweetness of the season, the regular course of the sun, the rising of the full moon, the burgeoning of fruits, the growth of plants, the blossoms on the trees, the lambs in the flocks, when the whole earth is verdant and the trees, laden down, creak under the burden of their fruits'. The speaker goes on to describe other aspects of spring, including typical human activities, and then concludes: 'For my part, I do not disbelieve all this, but I feel, or rather I am certain, that this is so because of the spiritual nature of the Pasch: it is the beginning, the head and leader of all times and ages because in this month the great mystery is accomplished and celebrated. Just as the Lord is the first-engendered and firstborn of all beings intelligible and invisible, likewise this month, which celebrates the sacred solemnity, becomes the first of the year and the beginning of all ages; and the year is that which is announced in the Divine Scriptures: Declare the acceptable year of the Lord (Isa. 61:2)' (SC27.145-149;

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<sup>69</sup> He suggests even that deification might extend to all of creation (assuming that 'creation' here is not again simply a short-hand for humans—presumably less likely in Bulgakov than in the ancient texts): 'The Lord has already united Himself with His creation, deified it, and abides in it. We also call the day of the descent of the Holy Spirit the day of the Holy Trinity, a second Epiphany as it were. God the Father, who has revealed Himself in His Son, also reveals Himself in the Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and is sent by the Son. God is trihypostatic love, the mutual love of the divine Hypostases, as well as love for creation, manifested in the divine condescension and descent. And now this divine descent is revealed fully: The Lord not only created the world but also came to dwell in it—the Father by the Son and by the Holy Spirit' (2008a:131).

<sup>70</sup> Many contemporary liturgical sources comment on the significance of celebrating Pascha in spring. The original date for the Annunciation and Pascha was the same as that for the Jewish Passover (the 14th of Nisan, the first month of the year) and the date for Nativity seems to have been based on calculating nine months from Christ's conception on the same day as his death. Carroll and Halton, for example, say that 'Lent became a season of *metanoia* and catechesis, and



LP:91).<sup>71</sup> The homily affirms the celebration of life, light, and creation in Christ and strongly stresses the typological significance of the beginning of spring, depicting it in colourful fashion with lots of natural imagery (SC27:144-145). It also repeatedly speaks of the significance of Christ's death and resurrection for the entire universe (including the celestial realms), mentioning humans as only one player among angels, stars, sky, and earth who are all exhorted to feast, as they have been redeemed by Christ (SC27:120-122). The liturgy itself also uses such spring imagery: 'On this day Spring is fragrant; the new creation danceth now; today the bars have been taken off of the doors of disbelief, as the friend Thomas doth cry out: Thou art my Lord and God truly' (Thomas, Praises, 78; also Second Week, Praises, 94).

This focus on spring is evident in much of the tradition. It is particularly obvious in several of Cyril of Alexandria's festal letters announcing the dates for the beginning of Lent, for Pascha, and for Pentecost.<sup>72</sup> In one of his earliest letters he describes in great detail the departing evils of winter and the new flowers of spring (II.3, SC372:198). He goes on to argue that it is not coincidental that Pascha falls into this time of fresh growth, because in this time especially we are to grow and flourish in piety (ibid.). He compares the demons to the season of winter and its rains and stresses the goodness of creation and its fruits (II.7, SC372:222). God's goodness extends to all of nature (II.8, SC372:230). In his ninth letter he indulges in another long description of spring, depicting the light that reflects on the mountains and makes them beautiful with forests and fresh flowers. All of nature is renewed in the spring, just as the resurrection makes everything new (IX.2, SC392:128-130). Again he contrasts winter and spring with each other, commenting on the appropriateness of celebrating the resurrection in spring and drawing on the Song of Songs for a parallel (XIII.2, SC434:92). Within this context of his description of spring, he affirms that 'we glorify the Saviour of the universe (τὸν ὅλον)' (XVI.1, SC434:216). While he does not make clear that by τὸν ὅλον he means anything besides humans, considering the context of the description, maybe he does actually say that the Saviour's work also extends to the earth which is reborn this spring. He reiterates the importance of celebrating Pascha in the first month and especially during spring in Letter XVI. The earth is heated by the stronger rays of the sun, the forest and plains are again clothed in green, fresh flowers perfume the gardens and the wild winds of winter have died down. In this context he rejects as anthropomorphic the idea that the sea or the earth could be imagined to praise God literally. Yet these images of spring speak a 'higher truth', namely the beauty of divine grace (XVI.2, SC434:218-220). The flowers of spring are an illustration of the spiritual life (XVI.3, SC434:224), because in Christ there is a new creation and a new era (XVI.4, SC434:228).

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spring was the simile that ran like a leitmotif through the sermons and instructions of so many preachers and teachers' (1988:276-77). For a thorough treatment of the dating issue, see Talley (1991).

<sup>71</sup> This is very similar to Eusebius' description: 'Spring is the most suitable time of salvation: the sun is at the beginning of its course, the moon at its side in full brilliance, transforming the whole course of the night into luminous day. Ended are the furies of the winter storms, ended the long nights, ended the floods. Henceforth in the newness of a shining atmosphere sailors find the sea calm. The fields are filled with ears of grain, the trees laden with fruit. But spring is suitable not just because of its beauty, but because it is the anniversary of the first days of creation. The spring is preferable to the extremes of winter and summer, and preferable to the autumn when the fields are barren and despoiled of their fruits. Spring is to the year what the head is to the body' (cited in LP:277).

<sup>72</sup> It is a far less prominent theme in Athanasius' letters announcing these dates.

Homilies frequently make the same connection between spring and resurrection. Asterius the Sophist says that Christ's resurrection renders it a sort of doubled spring:

The resurrection of Christ has caused a double Spring to rise on the world. How 'double'? Because along with the Spring visible to our senses has arisen the intelligible Spring. The intelligible Sun, Christ, the lamp of our souls, illuminator of the darkness, traversing the Passion like Winter, traversing Hades, death, and the tomb like sombre clouds, has shown us the resurrection a brilliant light and a radiant rising. Since the spring of the resurrection has arisen and since Christ, like the sun, has caused souls to rise by the wood of the cross, the vernal shower of baptism has come and has caused the newly-illuminated to be as resplendent as the flowers of Spring. (SC187.74; LP:277)<sup>73</sup>

Cyril of Jerusalem also extensively draws on spring imagery in his catechetical lectures, especially in order to prove the coherence and possibility of the resurrection.<sup>74</sup> Gregory of Nyssa beautifully depicts his delight at the coming of spring and then connects it to the final resurrection:

From the grain... let us pass to an examination of trees, noting how winter brings death to them each year. When their fruits are gathered the leaves fall and the trees remain bare and devoid of beauty. But when the moment of spring comes they are covered in beautiful blossoms and are clothed again with shady leaves. It is a sight to delight the eyes of man, a concert hall full of tuneful birds sitting among the branches... The life of reptiles leads me to the same conclusion, for their dynamic spark is dead in winter when they lie completely motionless in their holes for six months. But when the appointed time comes, and thunder reverberates through the world, they hear its sound like some signal of life, and quickly leap up and return to their customary ways after this long interval. What does this mean? Let the one who criticises and judges the works of God tell me why he admits that thunder restores the serpents from virtual death and yet denies that men are revived at the sound of God's trumpet as the Scripture says. (PG46.669, 672; LP:278)

Maybe the most beautiful description of how spring is affected by the resurrection is from one of Gregory Nazianzen's final homilies, preached on the Sunday after Pascha ('new Sunday'):

Let us turn, then, and also celebrate together in a way that befits this present moment. For everything is conspiring together, rejoicing together, for the beauty of this feast. Look at all that meets your eyes! The queen of seasons [spring] leads the way in the procession for the queen of days, showering from her own treasure every exquisite and delightful gift. Now heaven shines more brightly, the sun stands higher and glows more golden; now the moon's orb is more radiant, the chorus of the stars gleams more clearly. Now the sea's waves make their peace with the shores, the clouds with the sun, the winds with the air, the earth with the plants, the plants with our eyes. Now the springs gush forth with a new sparkle; now the rivers flow more abundantly, released from the bonds of winter's ice. Now the meadow is fragrant, the shoots burst forth, the grass is ready for mowing and the lambs skip through the rich green fields.

He goes on to describe the 'industrious bee' and the birds in detail and concludes: '*All things sing God's praise, and give him glory with wordless voices*. For God receives my thanks for all these things: so each of their songs becomes our hymn, *for I make their hymnody my own!*' (44.10-12, Daley:160-161; emphases mine).<sup>75</sup> All creatures sing God's praises and Gregory takes his cue from them making 'their hymnody' his own.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> (SC actually attributes this homily to Hesychius of Jerusalem.) A link is often established between the neophytes and lilies. Chrysostom makes this comparison, although he considers the baptismal 'flowers' more beautiful than those of spring (PG52.769; LP:118). Leontius also points this out in a homily on Pascha: 'The wilderness has become a paradise; it no longer produces the enemies' nettles, but flowers with newly illuminated lilies. ... Why are the newly illuminated called lilies too? Outwardly because of the witness of their clothes, inwardly because of the golden lustre of their faith' (VIII.13, 109; also IX.1, 113).

<sup>74</sup> See lectures IV.30, IX.10 (here to prove creation not resurrection), XIV.10 (on Christ's resurrection), and especially XVIII (on the resurrection of the dead).

<sup>75</sup> Averintsev, in order to illustrate what he calls 'the cosmic dimension of the Orthodox concept of Easter', quotes the sermon of twelfth-century bishop Kirill of Turov, which draws on this sermon by Gregory: 'Last Sunday all things were transformed: earth became heaven, cleansed by God from the defilement of demons; angels and women humbly celebrate the Resurrection. Creation was renewed [...]. The heavens have stripped off the dark clouds like coarse garments and are

Contemporary Orthodox preachers occasionally also use spring imagery. Bulgakov, for example, beautifully depicts the transition to spring in a homily on Pascha. He stresses the cosmic dimension:

The rays of light of Christ's resurrection penetrate the entire *universe*. In the resurrection, those who have passed away are alive for us; we send them the Paschal greeting, the tidings of the resurrection, which they know in their own manner. And it is not only the animate and intelligent creature that receives the power of the resurrection; the entire universe rises from the dead in Christ's body, exultant with the Paschal joy. 'The heavens rejoice, as does the earth. The entire world, visible and invisible, celebrates.' The prophetic gaze clearly discerns in nature the play of Paschal delight: the 'playing' sun, as well as the air, the waters, and the plants, are illuminated with the rays of divine joy. The human spirit that is being raised from the dead cannot find outside itself a dead nature, a nature that is not being raised together with it; and the human spirit summons this nature to Christ's resurrection. (2008a:114)

Although this is not a major theme in his treatment of Christ's descent into hell, Alfeyev also comments on the significance of Pascha for all of created life (2009:100, 198, 205).<sup>77</sup> Thus for several Orthodox thinkers the Paschal references to spring are not merely beautiful poetic imagery, but affirm that Christ's resurrection is on behalf of all of creation, including humans but not solely for them. All of nature, indeed the entire universe, is in some way renewed by the Paschal event.

## 2.5 Redemption

The newness of creation, especially as conveyed by the imagery of spring, thus suggests that Pascha has real implications for the earth and indeed for the whole cosmos. And on occasion some of the liturgical texts seem to speak more explicitly of something like 'cosmic redemption'.<sup>78</sup> Christ is said to have 'filled all things with fragrance' (Bright Monday, Stichera, 43). He 'arose from the dead, that He might save all things' (Bright Tuesday, Stichera, 45). Earth, mountains and hills are to bless him as 'Creator and Redeemer' (Paralytic, O8, 173). Christ enlightens the whole world and possibly even raises it up in his own resurrection: 'Thence didst Thou arise in glory, O Saviour, raising up together with Thyself all of creation (πάνσαν κτίσιν), which doth praise Thy might' ... 'He that liveth is risen and hath appeared, enlightening the ends of the earth

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filled with brightness, and with the bright air they proclaim the glory of the Lord.' He goes on to say that such visions of spring can also be found in Russian poetry: 'At midnight all nature and all flesh become silent and listen to the rumours of spring, that if only the weather clears up a little, it is a sign that death yields to the effort of the Resurrection' [Pasternak's poem 'On Holy Week', from his novel *Doktor Zhivago*]. He suggests that while 'the poetry of Pasternak does not set itself the task of reflecting in a strict manner any doctrinal message', nevertheless 'the decidedly cosmic character of the Orthodox Easter seems to be reproduced adequately enough' (in Louth & Casiday, 2006:228).

<sup>76</sup> The imagery of spring and its association with Pascha is also strong in Ephrem the Syrian's poetry. In fact, Ephrem uses natural imagery so frequently in his poetry that it is impossible to cite all the instances that would illustrate the close connection he sees between the events of salvation and their evidence in the larger creation. For one example, see his second hymn on the resurrection that frequently refers to flowers (SC502:73-75).

<sup>77</sup> Andronikof also makes frequent references to the importance of the Paschal liturgy for the entire cosmos, although he seems to interpret this cosmic dimension to apply primarily, if not exclusively, to humans (1985:186-193).

<sup>78</sup> Arseniev argues that the Paschal liturgy has 'a profoundly cosmic emphasis' which concerns 'the whole of creation': 'All the forces of evil which still reign in the world, death, suffering, wickedness, are in principle already deposed, already put to shame, already destroyed and crushed in this victory. This is why all creation is invited to participate in the joy of Easter. A cry of triumph; the joy of the emancipation and restoration of creation, of our reunion with God, of our rehabilitation to and participation in eternal life, a joy that takes possession of one's whole being, body and soul; the trembling adoration of this fullness of life which has entered into the tissue of our existence and has vanquished death... such are the themes of the Church's hymns on the night of Easter' (1964:31-32).

(φωτίζων τὰ πέρατα)’ (Samaritan, O6, 233).<sup>79</sup> It is not entirely clear, however, that here ‘all of creation’ or ‘the ends of the earth’ is not used merely as a poetic designation for ‘all humans’, as seems often the case in the liturgical texts. This raising of the whole world appears with some frequency, but the same caution probably applies in those instances also: ‘But Thou didst arise in glory and didst raise up the world together with Thyself, as it sang and chanted a song of victory’ (Blind Man, O1, 275). Yet, it might be significant in itself that the liturgical language is so ambivalent. In many instances, creation, world, and earth do indeed mean non-human creatures or the entire universe, as they are explicitly distinguished from humans. The fact that so often the terms seem collapsed into each other, where it is unclear whether creation means humans or non-humans, might suggest that in some ways this is an artificial distinction for the liturgical poets. Although their primary concern is indeed with human beings (they are, after all, writing for human celebrations and the homilists are speaking to a human congregation) they seem to see humans very much as part of the larger creation. What applies to humans in some way also applies to the rest of creation. Humans are included in and part of creation. Thus although here our concern is specifically with non-human creatures precisely in order to show that they are indeed part of God’s concern and in order to highlight their role more fully (and thus we must isolate references to them to some extent to show that this is true), the fact that the same terminology can so easily be employed both for humans and for the entire cosmos may itself be significant. Human and non-human creation are not seen as two essentially separate categories.

These liturgical and homiletic texts then may invite us to rethink the negligible role we usually assign to the non-human creation in the Paschal mystery. Far from being irrelevant, all of heaven and earth rejoice over the Paschal event. Its abundance of life is extended to all creatures, not just to human beings. Christ brings life to all. The power of death, not just over humans but over all of creation, is overcome in his death. The imagery of spring is so appropriate for Pascha precisely because it speaks of new life for all of creation, not merely for humans. Humans participate in the new life that has dawned for the whole cosmos as evident in the renewal of the entire earth in spring. One may say (employing Ricoeur’s language) that the Patristic homilies employ spring imagery mimetically. The renewal of spring *prefigures* the renewal which Christ brings. The liturgy *configures* this renewal and its meaning for human life. Now we must move to the third stage of mimesis and *refigure* or *transfigure* this message and its implications consistently with its first mimetic stage. As the natural world *prefigures*, so it is also *transfigured*: As the renewal of spring prefigures the renewing of life in the resurrection, so the resurrection means the renewing of all earthly life. In Christ’s resurrection, life has dawned for *all*, for the whole cosmos. This new life is not merely for humans, but it is for all of creation, for the whole earth, indeed for the whole universe, for all things. Is it possible to draw more explicit ecological implications from this message?

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<sup>79</sup> Similarly: ‘Since Thou art immortal God, Thou didst arise from the grave, and with Thee, O Saviour, Thou didst raise up all of the world, O Christ our God, by Thy might. Thou in Thy great power didst destroy death’s dominion and didst show forth unto all Thy dread Resurrection’ (Fifth Saturday, Sessional hymn, 261).

### 3. Ecological implications

The fact that the Paschal message is focused so exclusively on life and the ‘trampling of death’ may raise certain difficulties for an attempt to take our ecological reality seriously. Death is an integral part of life on our planet and indeed in the entire universe. Some of the liturgical texts seem to imply that death entered the world with Adam and is now entirely eliminated in Christ—reinforced by the Paschal icon, which shows Christ pulling Adam and Eve from the realm of the dead. Scientifically speaking, physical death cannot have entered the world only as the result of the specific trespass of a historical human being.<sup>80</sup> Death was part of the cosmos from the beginning, ‘corruption’ and disintegration predate our solar system and biological death certainly predates the arrival of humans on the planet by millions of years. At least in this universe, no life is possible without death. Any growth or nutrition depends on the death of other species or parts of a species’ body. What then does it mean that Christ overcomes death and brings life? And what would it mean to draw ecological implications from this affirmation of life?

#### 3.1 Life and death

All life on this planet requires death. Life indeed can only emerge because of death. The planetary system itself was formed through the death (by collision and disintegration) of other celestial bodies. The basic building blocks of life are only possible because of the death of the first generation of stars and the elements that were created in their various explosions. Indeed, ‘we all are stardust’.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, the concrete life on this planet emerges through many cycles of deaths, both plant and animal deaths. Decomposing plant matter is required for many aspects of life. It was probably the dinosaurs’ death on a tremendous scale that enabled the emergence of full mammalian life.<sup>82</sup> Eating requires the death of other species and many species are in turn nourished by the death of the organisms who eat them, including humans. Death and life are inextricably connected on this planet.<sup>83</sup> As Linzey points out: ‘Some Christians

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<sup>80</sup> Adam will be discussed more fully in chapter 3. Here I will focus on the intrinsic connection between life and death, which is central to evolutionary and ecological science but seems to pose difficulties for the Paschal vision just discussed.

<sup>81</sup> A phrase usually employed (often in sentimental fashion) to evoke our affinity with all other life in the universe. Yet we are *stardust* precisely because the first and second generations of stars have violently exploded and scattered their dust over the universe, enabling the formation of subsequent solar systems, planets, and providing the building blocks for the basic elements of life. While this death may not raise issues of theodicy on the same scale as the suffering and death of sentient creatures (as presumably the stars did not ‘feel’ their own explosion), surely it does point to a strong element of corruption and disintegration present in the universe from the beginning. And it is not just human death or a sort of spiritual death that the Patristic writings see as affected and suspended by the resurrection. They speak of corruption, disintegration, mortality and seem to mean the real corruption and disintegration of physical bodies and indeed of larger-scale corruption around them. That is precisely why spring is such good imagery for Pascha, because it seems to overcome all this corruption and death in a jubilant demonstration of an abundance of new life.

<sup>82</sup> Although some small mammals existed at the time of the dinosaurs, they could not have competed with them or probably developed much further.

<sup>83</sup> Conradie points out: ‘Not all forms of suffering are the result of human sin. This also applies to (human) mortality. Contrary to the dominant teaching in the Christian tradition, it should be clearly acknowledged that biological death did not enter the world merely as a result of human sin. Sin is the sting of death, not its physical cause. Death and the extinction of species formed an integral part of nature since the emergence of life on earth. This assessment is abundantly clear from scientific reconstructions of the evolution of life on earth. Following this assessment most, if not all, ecological theologies have rightly rejected any notion of human immortality, for example in the form of the immortality

have difficulty in believing in cosmic disorder, let alone a source of cosmic evil, present in the world before the arrival of dinosaurs and human beings. That view certainly has its problems, but it is theologically essential if we are to believe that predation is not willed by the Creator. The alternative is dire beyond words, for it involves accepting that the “natural world” is actually God’s creation as first intended and, as a corollary, that death, disease, decay, and predation are actually God’s will for all living beings’ (2007:54). He goes on to reject this ‘dire’ alternative. Yet it is one that cannot be simply dismissed as unacceptable. Some contemporary thinkers indeed affirm that the ultimate message of the Christian faith must be the end to all corruption and disintegration and thus effectively to any sort of life as we know it in this universe. Seldom do they give much explanation of how they envision animal life (or indeed bodily human life) without any sort of corruption or death.<sup>84</sup> Another strong current among ecological thinkers includes those who think that death must be affirmed as an essential part of life and prefer to abandon most standard atonement theories altogether (McFague, 2000; Primavesi, 2000). Death itself must be celebrated as part of creation.<sup>85</sup> This seems hard to reconcile with the message of Pascha and its interpretation by most Orthodox thinkers (past and present).<sup>86</sup>

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of the soul, as the remnants of Hellenistic influence on Christian doctrine. Instead of such a body-soul dualism, the radicalness of death is emphasised as something which affects the whole human being. Moreover, death is typically accepted as an integral part of God’s good creation. It is not the product of human sin (only)’ (2005a:44-45). He does see this as a major problem of theodicy: ‘There seems to be something inherently violent and destructive in the cosmos. One may consider the indescribable ferocity which is evident in earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, black holes and collisions between objects in space. Likewise, the processes of evolution seem to be incredibly wasteful, condemning most emergent forms of life to early distinction. Natural selection appears to be replete with pain, injustice, contingency and spillage. It eliminates ruthlessly and mindlessly all those who are not “fit” to survive and to reproduce’ (47). Deane-Drummond (2008:122, 2009:159) and Page (1996:38) also raise some of these questions.

<sup>84</sup> In contrast, McDaniel argues that ‘even God could not have lured the cosmos into existence without violence’ (1995:109).

<sup>85</sup> A similar question is raised by the destiny of the planet and the universe. Eschatological questions in particular pose difficulties for the dialogue between science and religion. On the one hand, most ecological writers seek to emphasise the importance of earthly life and try to rethink eschatology in a bodily and earthly fashion instead of locating it in some merely spiritual realm which has no continuity with this earth or our bodies. They seek to return to the fundamental Christian affirmation of the resurrection of the body and often want to extend it to a renewal of all of earthly life (resurrection of animals, renewal of plant life). Yet, there certainly cannot be any ‘eternal’ life on this planet. Its life is destined to end in about 5 billion years, as the sun becomes increasingly hotter in its burning process and ultimately engulfs the closer planets (including earth) in its expansion and the heat will have made any life on earth impossible long before that. The ultimate destiny of this particular planet, like that of most planets, is death. Physicists still debate the future of the universe as a whole, but the general consensus is that the universe will keep expanding until the various centres of matter and energy drift so far apart from each other that all activity will ultimately cease and the universe will die a slow ‘heat-death’, condemned to a cold and barren nothingness. The future of the universe in no way supports the optimistic Christian vision of the future. Yet, on the other hand, envisioning ‘heaven’, ‘paradise’ or ‘eternal life’ as a place entirely disconnected from this earth or universe makes it difficult to conceive in what sense that constitutes a renewal of all things. Of course one can simply dismiss all these problems through an appeal to God’s omnipotence, but that fails to take the conversation or its difficulties seriously. A notion of cosmic redemption that is truly cosmic in scope and thus considers the fate of planets, solar systems, and the universe as a whole, presents tremendous difficulties. If life is the fundamental message of Pascha, it is difficult to see how this message would make any difference to the destiny of the earth or the universe as a whole.

This is not a question I can address here. To some extent the emphasis on liturgy as present celebration helps to focus the discussion on our present ecological situation instead of being distracted by questions of origins and ends which have occupied science and religion discussions to a rather excessive degree. Moltmann (1996, 2004) and Pannenberg (1993) have addressed this issue to some extent. David Wilkinson (2010) explores it the most fully (from a Methodist evangelical perspective). He is quite critical of Moltmann and Pannenberg, although more positive about Polkinghorne’s writings (2002) on this subject.

<sup>86</sup> Schmemmann argues that ‘only Christianity’ proclaims death ‘to be *abnormal* and, therefore, truly horrible’ (2003:100). Argenti affirms that God can be seen in the evolutionary process, although he simply ignores the evidence of death and

The liturgy does not answer questions about origins and ends. Although it is both strongly linked with the past by virtue of anamnesis and does indeed encapsulate hope for the future in its eschatological dimension, it does not explore past and future per se but re-reads (or rather re-experiences and pre-experiences) them creatively in the present. Liturgy is about the *now*, the *today*, this moment. It is *now* that we stand at the cross and *now* that we enter heaven and celebrate with the angels, although of course past and future are not simply collapsed into the present. We can appropriate and live the experience of Christ's passion and resurrection, because he did indeed suffer and die. And we celebrate the triumph of life at Pascha because we believe that indeed life will triumph. Yet the liturgy is not suited to and not particularly interested in speculation about the exact shape of that past or future in any historical or predictive sense. It matters primarily for its present experience and celebration, although its past and future connotations are indeed essential for this poetic appropriation of the present. One may say that there is a past and future dimension to the present but this does not allow the present extrapolation *into* the future. The directionality is always the reverse: past and future come into the now, the past is made real in celebration as anamnesis (or even dramatic/mimetic representation which, however, never collapses into a mere historical imitation or display for its own sake) and the present is similarly made real in celebration as the expectation that this future breaks in and begins now, that our present—shaped by the past—transforms into the future and that the vision of the future has real implications for how we are to live our lives here and now. Thus liturgy is not qualified to answer the question whether there was a historical Adam or whether the planet will exist indefinitely and be transformed into heaven or paradise. What we know about the history and future of the planet rather suggests otherwise, but Adam and Paradise (past or future) are not employed by the liturgy to deal with such issues.<sup>87</sup>

Liturgy, then, redirects our focus from concerns with the origin or future of the universe to the reality in which we find ourselves now. It consecrates the present by filling it with past and future. The anamnetic and eschatological dimensions of the liturgy are for the purpose of the celebration that takes place *today*. Schmemmann strongly stresses this dimension of the present in his analyses of death and Pascha and consistently emphasises their meaning for this life here and now (2003). In this Pascha, today, death is overcome by life. And yet, the liturgy realises the struggle between death and life and even the close connection between death and life in its poetry. Christ opens the door to life precisely by and through his death. Every liturgical year anew death and life struggle with each other (quite graphically) and life wins. Yet it is consistently affirmed that life could not triumph without Christ's death. One is not possible without the other. On a profoundly theological level, the liturgy realises the intimate connection between life and death, while celebrating the ultimate triumph of life. Pascha, then, does not deny the power of death. Rather, it affirms the triumph of life over death. And as spring renews the earth each year after the death of winter, so

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focuses only on life: 'It is therefore to be expected that the world should bear traces of her Creator: the birth of every life-form—every tiny animal, every seedling, every impulse of youth and regeneration, all are symbols of Life, reflections of that deep reality which is the Life of the Creator Himself. The whole evolutionary order bears witness to God—from the mineral to the vegetable to the animal, to the human race and its great saints and sages' (2006:73).

<sup>87</sup> Behr comes to a similar conclusion about Patristic treatment of life and death, although liturgy is not the direct focus of his work (2006:77-86).

the Paschal triumph of life over death is celebrated again every year anew.<sup>88</sup> The fact that we are constantly exhorted by the liturgical texts to enter into the Paschal mystery *today* instead of merely commemorating a past event may be significant in grappling with the reality of death and evil in the world (both in our lives and the larger cosmos). While the liturgy does not resolve these difficulties, explain their origin or predict their future in any literal fashion,<sup>89</sup> it takes seriously their reality in its celebrations. It hence qualifies an over-realised eschatology that implies that faith eliminates any struggle between concordance and discordance, that death is already overcome. Each year (maybe each moment) we struggle anew with the power of death and must enter into and make real the power of life.<sup>90</sup> And, indeed, this has profound implications for ecological praxis. Most fundamentally, Pascha affirms and pleads for the overcoming of death by life here and now. While it does so always within an eschatological framework and never forgets this eschatological dimension, this message is for ‘today’ as is constantly affirmed by the liturgy. Pascha exhorts to a celebration of life. Death is overcome and rejected. And even in the ancient world, which did not have our contemporary ecological problems, this is indeed seen to have implications for everyday life especially in regard to care for the poor and outcast. Pascha especially exhorts us to bring a life-giving message to those who suffer daily corruption and death through oppressive social structures. The homilists continually exhort their congregations that the new life of Pascha is for all and that all are invited equally to the feast.

The fundamental affirmation of the ‘world’ opened by Pascha, then, can inspire us to fight against the death our lifestyle is inflicting on other species and to seek to bring life to all creatures. Bartholomew suggests this in several homilies for Pascha (e.g., 2011:24). While we still have a very limited knowledge of how ecosystems flourish and how the overall harmony of the biosphere can be maintained, in many places it is not difficult to see what causes death and what contributes to life. The strong emphasis on the Paschal imagery of spring can become a paradigm for ecological action. It is very clear that our consumer lifestyle, which exploits even renewable natural resources to the point where they become exhausted, is a contract with death. Oil spills and other toxic disasters demonstrate such death visibly and crassly. The rapid rise in the extinction of whole species is a tremendous and irrevocable dealing in death. The dried-up forests, killed by acid rain, are as much of a visible image of death, as are polluted lakes, rivers and oceans. The cutting of the rain forests, elimination of other habitats, sedimentation, soil erosion, and desertification all are visible demonstrations of the death of whole ecosystems that usually mean death for many living species that had their habitat in these systems.

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<sup>88</sup> This does raise interesting questions about the inculturation of liturgy in the southern hemisphere where spring and Pascha do not coincide (or in tropical climates that have no season of spring at all). Some contemporary liturgical studies consider this question (Chupungco, 1982, 1992; Baldovin, 1991; Rashkover, 2006). Although it is an important issue, it is not one I can consider here.

<sup>89</sup> Of course, the liturgy does grapple poetically with questions of origin and eschaton. But these are neither scientific answers nor are they usually intended to be taken literally. (The questions of origin and eschaton will return in chapters three and four dealing with liturgical language about the fall and theosis.)

<sup>90</sup> Bartholomew says: ‘The resurrection, therefore, does not consist in reanimating a corpse according to the categories of a fallen world. It consists rather in the radical transformation of those categories, the transfiguration of humanity and of the entire cosmos. Ever since Pascha—and it is always Pascha—it is not longer nothingness, but rather Spirit, a life of meaning, indeed, life itself, which is more powerful than death and which overturns its effects—all this comes to us through death and through the life-threatening conditions of our daily existence—if only, in humble confidence, we unite our life to the life-giving wounds of the Resurrected One’ (1997:62).



Something is seriously wrong when our lifestyles cause death at the rate of several species a day. And ultimately all this means death for human beings as well. Already the increasingly strong storms, floods, and changing weather patterns have cost many human, animal, and plant lives. Rising temperatures and oceans and the many changes they bring for the symbiotic interplay of the rest of nature will continue and increase this pattern of death. In all these places death is obvious and almost all of it is caused by direct human behaviour or its indirect consequences. It is not difficult to conclude that we are dealing in death instead of promoting life. In his 2006 address for Pascha, Bartholomew condemns the ‘plundering of the natural environment by human beings who, driven by greed and lust for profit, violently and cunningly subordinate and exploit creation. Such conduct not only distorts the beauty of creation granted by our Creator but also undermines the foundations and conditions necessary for the survival of future generations’ (2011:41). He ends with an appeal for life: ‘We call for an end to the killing of one another, and we denounce all violence and fanaticism that threatens life. The victory of the Resurrection must be experienced as a victory of life, of solidarity, of the future, and of hope’ (ibid.).

The message of Pascha must inspire us anew to overcome death and to bring life in its stead. While we certainly should guard against any hubristic assumptions that we can easily ‘fix’ all the problems we have caused or that it is simple to do so, many actions that contribute to life are far less ambivalent.<sup>91</sup> We can clean up rivers—not to speak of our streets, public places and backyards—we can preserve ecosystems by refusing to turn them into highways or housing developments, we can foster our children’s appreciation of non-human creatures and the earth. Most importantly, we can and indeed must stop our death-dealing practices: our tremendous consumption of energy, our use of products that do not decompose but pollute and poison the earth, our exhaustion of resources, both renewable (but at a pace too rapid for them to renew) and nonrenewable, our rape of the earth. Pascha calls us to bring life not death and its symbolism of spring and water remind us of our responsibility for this earth.

### 3.2 Care for the poor

As shown above, the preachers continually remind their respective audiences that a Christian life should have implications for how others are treated. It implies concern for widows, orphans, strangers, and especially the poor. Cyril of Alexandria mentions this at the conclusion of every Paschal letter, to the point where it seems to have become a formula that is self-evident. John Chrysostom and Gregory Nazianzen are impassioned in their pleas for their congregations to care for the poor, ill, and disadvantaged. In a long homily on poverty (especially exemplified by lepers), Gregory exhorts his congregation to compassionate care for the poor based on a beautiful reflection on Christ’s corporeality (14.15, Daley:83). He appeals to the example of God’s generous care for creation in order to move them to similar care for the poor:

Let us imitate God’s highest and first law, which makes the rain fall on the just and sinners, and makes the sun rise equally on all. He has spread out the unsettled land for everyone on earth, with springs and rivers and forests;

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<sup>91</sup> This affirmation of life does not imply, however, that we should put as many children into the world as possible. On the day this thesis was submitted, the UN marked human population increase to over 7 billion. Overpopulation often means death for many other species due to competition over resources and habitat.

he provides air for the winged species, and water for all whose life is spent there; he lavishes the basic supports of living ungrudgingly on all—not putting them under the power of force, or the limits of law, or the divisions of geographical boundaries—but sets them forth as the rich and uncommon possessions of all, not in any way lessened for this reason. Beings of like rank in nature he honours with equal gifts, and so he shows how rich his own generosity is. But human beings, in contrast, bury their gold and silver and their soft, unneeded clothing in the ground, along with their shining jewels and other riches of this kind—all tokens of violence and discord and primeval oppression—and then they raise their eyes in incomprehension, shutting off the stream of mercy from their unfortunate fellow mortals. (14.25, 89).

Using the example of Joseph and Nicodemus, he suggests that caring for the poor is really caring for Christ (14.40, 97). This homily is not an isolated example. Chrysostom argues similarly in his homilies on the rich man and Lazarus where he exhorts his congregation to charity and suggests that not sharing our wealth with the poor is theft (Roth:55). Many churches engaged in extensive care for lower classes, including the distribution of food and clothes to the poor and the building of hospitals, orphanages, and even homes for the elderly, as is evident in several of Chrysostom's homilies and letters where he requests monetary support for such institutions. We also know of Basil's engagement for such causes in Caesarea and other places in Cappadocia. Evidently, the message of Pascha had real implications for the social world of their time.<sup>92</sup>

Care for the poor today can no longer be separated from ecological questions. It is widely recognised that negative environmental changes affect the poor disproportionately, especially women and children who are usually the poorest of the poor (Hallman, 1994; Cobb, 1992; Boff, 1995, 1997; Boff & Elizondo, 1995, Ruether, 1996; see Appendix I). Drinking water and other basic subsistence needs are becoming increasingly difficult to procure for masses of people. Their suffering and poverty is directly linked to the high-consumption lifestyle of the rich (especially in industrialised countries of the north, but also the exploitative practices of the few wealthy in these poorer nations). Toxic garbage dumps are nearly always located in poor neighbourhoods. It is recognised that the changing weather patterns, which increase precipitation in some places and cause droughts in others, affect already marginal areas especially in the southern hemisphere disproportionately.<sup>93</sup> Deserts will spread even further. Large cities with even larger slums in India and Bangladesh as well as many poor island nations are most susceptible to flooding resulting from rising ocean levels and increased storms. Industrialisation in many places pushes the poor off their land into marginal areas and destroys subsistence cultures that had learned to live with the fragile ecosystems in which they found themselves. This often creates the impression that the poor are the ones responsible for erosion in mountains areas not conducive to crop cultivation or destructive of the forests that they burn to grow food. Yet these practices are often desperate measures of survival because they have been driven out from the land on which they used to live in much more sustainable subsistence cultures (Gudnyas in Boff, 1997:106-113).<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> For an interesting engagement with all three of the Cappadocians' teaching and practice in regard to poverty, see Holman (2001). Many treatments of Chrysostom comment on his concern for poverty (e.g., Mayer & Allen, 2000: sections 5-6). Evdokimov summarises the Patristic writings about poverty in order to call for an Orthodox social ethic (2001:82-87). See also Yannoulatos (2003:157-161).

<sup>93</sup> This is also highlighted by the most recent *Vital Signs* publication of the WorldWatch Institute (2011:44-49).

<sup>94</sup> This is not a 'romanticising' of 'primitive' cultures but a description of current reality. Certainly many less industrialised past cultures have also destroyed their environments. In the crassest cases these civilisations probably perished precisely due to such destruction. See Ponting for an historical account (1991).

Many liberation theologians, ecofeminists and environmental ethicists recognise this as an issue of environmental justice and argue that social justice and environmental justice are intimately linked, indeed that at this point one is not possible without the other. Hunger and poverty are closely connected to environmental conditions. Many movements among the poor themselves acknowledge this connection (especially Hallman, 1994 and Ruether, 1996). The Chipko movement in India and the Greenbelt movement in Kenya are only the most well-known examples of many indigenous movements to preserve the soil, protect the trees, and restore the exploited land (Gnanadason in Hallman, 1994). If we do not find ways of living from the earth without killing it at the same time, we also will not survive. Here the Patristic exhortations to care for the poor must take on ecological dimensions. And indeed Patriarch Bartholomew, who has worked ceaselessly to raise consciousness on behalf of environmental issues, often points to the close connections between environmental degradation and poverty (2008:108-119; 2011:283, 302, 408; 2012:34, 244-245, 272-273). Both are caused and exacerbated by the consumer lifestyle of the wealthy. Overcoming death by life means especially a concern for those who are suffering and dying because of our exploitation. Bartholomew even explicitly links this to liturgy: 'How we respond to people (especially those in need) and how we treat creation (especially through the lifestyle we lead) in turn reflect how we worship our Creator God' (2011:297). He elaborates this by exhorting us to 'respond to nature with the same delicacy, the same sensitivity and tenderness, with which we respond to a human being in a relationship' (ibid.). This seems to suggest that our care should extend beyond people to other creatures.

### 3.3 Compassion for the earth?

One might therefore carry this concern for the poor in the Patristic texts even further. They exhort us to compassion for the poorest of the poor. At their time, these were poor people on the margins of society and as the preceding section has shown, these poor are still among us and similarly require our help. Yet, maybe the 'poorest of the poor' today are no longer merely human. Several ecological theologians have suggested that our compassion ought to extend beyond humans to animals and all other creatures (Linzey, 2007, 2009; McDaniel, 1989, 1995; McFague, 1997, 2001:167 and in Hessel & Ruether, 2000:35; Nash, 1991; Uehlinger in Boff, 1995:56; Deane-Drummond & Clough, 2009).<sup>95</sup> Cobb puts it starkly: 'All life involves robbery, but modern social life is grand larceny. Ecology does not teach us that life is unjustified in its robbery. From the fact that something of value is destroyed when we kill an animal, it does not follow that we should stop eating meat, although that is a serious ethical issue. But it does follow that the development of a civilisation which decimates other species casually and threatens to deforest much of the rest of the planet in the next two

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<sup>95</sup> Clark uses highly sarcastic language to speak of some of these theologians (who unlike Linzey do not seem to draw consequences for action from their theological statements): 'If we have briefly *imagined* a better world, that is as much as to make it, and we need trouble ourselves no longer about our action or inaction in a dangerous world. Little else can explain the way in which so many earnest believers, especially at conferences about the duties of "stewardship", *talk* lovingly about God's creatures and the everlasting covenant, and then start eating them. The thesis that Jewish, or Christian, doctrine is uniquely or uniformly hostile to the claims of animals and nature is simply false... But experience does, unfortunately, suggest that conferences of Christian theologians have a far lower proportion of active zoophiles than can now be expected at secular conferences of philosophers' (1993:113, emphasis his).

decades is beyond justification. We have passed all moral limits' (1982:122). Edwards argues that Christians 'are called to love their fellow creatures as God loves them, not in sentimental and anthropomorphic ways, but in a way that respects the distinctiveness and otherness of a kangaroo, an eagle, or a whale' (2006:16).

McDaniel returns to this theme particularly often and posits it as *the* question motivating his work: 'An inclusive life-centredness is needed because "the least of these" now include animals subjected to cruel treatment in factory farms and scientific laboratories, endangered and extinct species whose habitats have been disrupted by direct and indirect exploitation, and the Earth itself, with its shrinking forests, eroded topsoils, encroaching deserts, contaminated waterways, polluted atmosphere, and depleted ozone layer' (1989:15). And he asks whether Christianity really is 'good news for all': 'To be truly good, it must also be good news for cramped calves confined in cages, frightened rats undergoing painful experiments, species of birds whose habitats are being destroyed, dying rivers, polluted atmospheres, and the Earth itself' (1995:93). Does the message of Pascha make any difference to other creatures?

While for many Christians a theological requirement of compassion for animals seems unthinkable, it is possible that bridging the gap between the rich and the poor was similarly unthinkable in apostolic and Patristic times. Slaves and the desperately poor were often not considered fully human and it has taken centuries to overcome these social assumptions (if they are fully overcome yet). Many have argued that Christian inclusion of slaves in their society (although not exclusively Christian but also true of some other isolated examples, especially among the Stoics) presented an unprecedented societal change. Early Christian communities may not have been as radically inclusive as we sometimes paint them,<sup>96</sup> but they were certainly radical in many ways. Mercy and compassion are constant themes in the Patristic literature. Maybe it is time that such compassion be extended to the other creatures with whom we share this planet?

Some Christian writers indeed imagine extending compassion to animals, which are the most prevalent non-human creatures in hagiographic literature, although they are less prominent than they are sometimes claimed to be.<sup>97</sup> John McGuckin summarises the standard accounts:

Saints are traditionally expected to have powerful control over sickness and demons (not unrelated concepts in the mindset of antiquity) but also customarily show harmony with wild beasts, who come to assist them (lions help to dig the graves of the great ascetics and so on), in a theme that evokes the restoration of an Edenic condition in the wilderness inhabited by the saints of Christ. Such a theme of harmony with nature is continued throughout the eastern tradition, and can be seen exemplified in the life of one of the great Russian saints of early modern times, Seraphim of Sarov, who had tamed a wild bear that visitors used to see at play beside his forest hermitage in Russia. He is often depicted in icons with the bear playing nearby. The saint heals the world not merely the soul. (2001:101-102)

Such harmony with nature and 'healing' of the world is precisely understood as an eschatological anticipation of final salvation, as Paschal redemption made manifest today. Yet many of these stories are highly ambivalent. Almost every discussion of Orthodox ecology cites a passage from Isaac the Syrian that responds to the question 'what is a merciful heart?' by counselling compassion for animals:

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<sup>96</sup> Mayer and Allen claim in their introduction to John Chrysostom that the poorest of the poor were not actually in the churches but stood outside of them begging (2000:35-36).

It is the heart's burning for the sake of the entire creation, for men, for birds, for animals, for demons, and for every created thing; and by the recollection and sight of them the eyes of a merciful man pour forth abundant tears. From the strong and vehement mercy which grips his heart and from his great compassion, his heart is humbled and he cannot bear to hear or see any injury or slight sorrow in creation. For this reason he offers up tearful prayer continually even for irrational beasts, for the enemies of the truth, and for those who harm him, that they be protected and receive mercy. And in like manner he even prays for the family of reptiles because of the great compassion that burns without measure in his heart in the likeness of God. (Homily 71, 344-45)<sup>98</sup>

Yet, Isaac also illustrates the holy ascetic as one who crushes animals (a passage basically never cited):

The humble man approaches ravening beasts, and when their gaze rest upon him, their wildness is tamed. They come up to him as to their Master, wag their heads and tails and lick his hands and feet, for they smell coming from him that same scent that exhaled from Adam before the fall, when they were gathered together before him and he gave them names in Paradise. This was taken away from us, but Jesus has renewed it, and given it back to us through His Coming. This it is which has sweetened the fragrance of the race of men. Again, the humble man approaches deadly creeping things, and as soon as the feel of his hand comes near and touches their body, the virulence and the harshness of their deadly venom ceases; and *he crushes them in his hands as if they were locusts*. (Homily 77, 1984:383; emphasis mine)<sup>99</sup>

Here the animals come trustingly to the saint with their 'venom' eliminated and the saint responds by crushing them. Hardly a vision of compassion. Furthermore, while Isaac can envision the redemption of demons, he is abundantly clear that only rational creatures are saved (humans, angels, demons), while irrational creatures will not even be remembered in heaven.<sup>100</sup> Concern for God and love of earthly creatures are at times seen as incompatible with each other. Similarly, stories of friendship between animals and various ascetics are balanced by often quite morbid demonstrations of power over animals, such as the elder in the middle of the desert who tears serpents and scorpions in half and is admired for his 'grace' and 'purity' (XIX.15, SC498:151).<sup>101</sup> While there is occasionally a marked appreciation for the beauty of creation, there are as many comments about how nature is a distraction from focus on God and the soul, such as the ascetic who wraps his face in a cloth so the trees will not distract him from prayer (XI.68, SC474:175-77). Compassion for animals or the earth remained an ambivalent topic in Christian literature.

Yet, while an application of compassion for the poor to compassion for nonhuman creatures or the ground is not itself supported by the Patristic literature, neither is it excluded by it. While Isaac himself seems

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<sup>97</sup> There are several collections of such stories (Waddell, 1934; Stefanatos, 1992, 2001; Power-Bratton, 1993; Tilley in Barnes, 1994; Birch & Vischer, 1997). Many Orthodox writings on ecology also mention such stories (e.g., Theokritoff, 2009:117-154). Seraphim of Sarov and his bear is a particularly favourite example.

<sup>98</sup> Not only is this the only passage that speaks of compassion for animals, but it is also put into the mouth of someone else, thus in a sense not even said by Isaac himself (though presumably endorsed by him). No one comments on this fact.

<sup>99</sup> Theokritoff actually does quote the beginning of the second passage, but leaves out the sentence where the saint crushes the animals that have just come trustingly to him (2009:120). She does consider the status of animals briefly at the end of her treatment and points to it as question requiring further reflection (238-240)

<sup>100</sup> The final sections (chapters XXXVIII-XL) of Part II of Isaac's homilies set forth a vision of universal salvation which even includes demonic powers. Throughout Isaac consistently speaks of 'rational' beings only. In Homily 37 (in Part I) he raises the question of what will happen to creation in the eschaton. After a beautiful depiction of the natural world, he explains that this will completely disappear and that we will have no recollection of it or miss it ('the memory of the former creation will never again enter into the heart of any man', 1995:181). This is consistent with his claim in Homily 59 that 'no man possessing love for the world can attain to the love of God. And likewise no one who has communion with the world can have communion with God, and no one who has concern for the world can have concern for God' (288).

<sup>101</sup> Of course snakes and scorpions—just as the wild beasts crushed in Isaac—are representative of the malicious creatures introduced into creation after the fall (or at least turned to enmity with humans by it). This presumably justifies the saints' destruction of them, despite the fact that their 'virulence' and 'their deadly venom ceases' (in Isaac's passage cited above).

unable to imagine the salvation of ‘irrational’ creatures, yet his strong focus on God’s mercy and compassion<sup>102</sup> which can extend even to the redemption of demons (and the fact that in at least one instance the saint is one who has compassion on animals) may enable us to imagine it for him. If God can be held to have compassion for demons, why should it be impossible to extend such compassion to God’s good creation? In fact, several contemporary Orthodox writers engage in speculation about universal salvation and usually do so on the basis of God’s compassion which would be limited if anyone were excluded from it (Bulgakov, 2008b:454-519; Alfeyev, 2009:213-218; Ware, 2000:193-215). Yet, no one seems to consider extending it to non-human creatures. What exactly is it about ‘animality’ or ‘irrationality’ that supposedly makes it incapable of salvation? Is not the destruction of other creatures (at the very least of sentient ones) just as incompatible with God’s mercy and compassion?

It is interesting that in his analysis of the flood story within his sermons on the rich man and Lazarus, Chrysostom suggests that Noah got drunk because of his great grief after seeing the devastation wreaked on creation by the flood upon exiting the ark: ‘Noah went forth, saved from shipwreck. He saw the earth made desolate. He saw a tomb improvised from mud, a common grave of animals and men, all the bodies of horses, human beings, and all kinds of irrational beasts buried together in heaps. He saw that tragedy; he saw the earth groaning bitterly. He was very discouraged. Everyone had perished. No human being, no animal, nothing outside of the ark had been saved. He saw only the heavens. He was overcome by discouragement; he was held fast by anguish. He drank wine and yielded himself to sleep to relieve the wound of his discouragement’ (Roth:113-114).<sup>103</sup> Clearly Noah is implied to have compassion with the animals and the ground devastated by the flood. John of Kronstadt speaks frequently of the importance of compassion for animals and plants in his spiritual writings (e.g., 1984:89, 110).<sup>104</sup> Arseniev reports of Makar of Optino that ‘he was full of pity for animals. In winter he cared for the birds every day; he would spread out hemp seeds for them, on a little shelf he had attached outside his window. A flock of little titmice, linettes and woodpeckers used to enjoy the starlets’ favours. He used to watch that the bigger birds, like the jays, did not hurt the little ones. Since the jays tried to devour all the food meant for the other birds, he would put out grain in a little glass trough where the

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<sup>102</sup> This theme is very strong in Isaac to the point where he juxtaposes it to the notion of justice (which he rejects as inconsistent with God’s mercy). In Homily 51, for example, he says: ‘As grass and fire cannot coexist in one place, so justice and mercy cannot abide in one soul. As a grain of sand cannot counterbalance a great quantity of gold, so in comparison God’s use of justice cannot counterbalance His mercy. As a handful of sand thrown into the great sea, so are the sins of all flesh in comparison with the mind of God. And just as a strongly flowing spring is not obstructed by a handful of dust, so the mercy of the Creator is not stemmed by the vices of His creatures’ (244; creatures here refers to human beings).

<sup>103</sup> Although Chrysostom does not comment on this in this particular context, it is significant that the covenant God makes after the flood is made with all of creation, explicitly including ‘every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you’ (Gen. 9:10), a covenant established between God and ‘all flesh that is on the earth’ (Gen. 9:17). He also does not say anything about this in his earlier commentary on Genesis.

<sup>104</sup> In fact, occasionally he suggests that we should learn from animals how to be kind and compassionate: ‘Look at the ants, how friendly they are; look at the bees, how friendly they are; look at the flights of pigeons, daws, rooks, crows, geese, ducks, swans, sparrows, how friendly they are; look at a flock of sheep, and in general at any horned cattle, how friendly they all are. Think of the innumerable shoals of some sorts of fishes in the seas and rivers, which always like to move in shoals, how friendly they are. Think also how zealously they all take care of each other, help each other, love each other—and be shamed by the dumb creatures, you who do not live in love with others and flee from the obligation of bearing one another’s burdens’ (1897:163).

little titmice could easily get it' (1964:138). Compassion for animals is certainly not entirely unprecedented in the tradition.

Such compassion is articulated much more explicitly by a contemporary Serbian theologian, Justin Popovitch (1894-1979). Although he does not address the ecological crisis explicitly, he frequently comments on the evils of pollution and of disregard for animals. In an interesting piece included in a recent English translation of a selection of his writings he imaginatively envisions the world from the perspective of a deer and laments human evils graphically, setting them in explicit contrast to divine compassion:

Each cruelty is an entire death for me. Most of all in this world I have been surviving the cruelties of one being called man. Sometimes he is the death of all my joys. O my eyes, look through him and above him to the One who is All-good and All-gentle! Goodness and gentleness, this is life for me, this is immortality, this is eternity. Without goodness and gentleness—life is hell. When I keep in mind the goodness of the All-gentle One, I am completely in paradise. If human cruelty closes in on me, how hell then closes in on me with all its terrors! Therefore, I am frightened of man, every man, unless he is good and gentle. (2009:110)

The deer remembers the joyful paradise of its youth, describing the beauty of flowers and trees and then comments: 'But he stepped into my paradise. He—cruel, brutal, and arrogant—man. He trampled my flowers, chopped down my woods, and darkened the sky. And thus, he transformed my paradise into hell... O men, how brutal and cruel you are! I have heard that demons exist. Is it really possible that they are worse than men?' (110-111). The deer accuses humans of disregarding its 'beauteous and wondrous feelings' and of disregarding its world: 'What devils are to you, you men are to us' (112). The deer states in crass language that it would rather forgo heaven than share it with humans: 'My soul aspires to one desire: not to live either in this world or in the other world next to a man who is intelligent but has no goodness or compassionate gentleness. Only in this way will I agree to immortality and eternity' (113). Christ is seen as unique among humans precisely because of his meekness, mercy and compassionate gentleness. Through this he is able to recreate paradise and bring new life to the deer and other gentle creatures. The deer concludes:

Oh, we saw in Him that man can be wondrous and exceedingly beautiful only when he is sinless. He shared in our sorrow and wept with us on account of the evils that men have committed against us. He was with us, and against those human creations: sin, evil, and death. He loved all creatures gently and compassionately; He hugged them with a divine longing; and He defended them from human sin, human evil, and human death. He was, and has forever remained our God, the God of sorrowful and saddened creatures, from the smallest to the greatest... Therefore, all our love rushes toward the all-meek, all-good, all-merciful and gentle Jesus. He is our God, and our Immortality, and our Eternity. His Gospel is ours more than man's because more of His goodness, His love, and His gentleness is in us. (113-114)

This remarkable text is extraordinary both in Popovitch's overall work<sup>105</sup> and in the tradition more generally. Here Christ's death and resurrection are understood as an explicit identification with non-human creatures in order to save them from the death and evil to which humans have subjected them. Despite its uniqueness, the text is consistent with the emphasis on the importance of compassion and gentleness found in much monastic writing. Indeed, a larger emphasis on mercy and compassion (without any explicit ecological implications)

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<sup>105</sup> Besides other articles Popovitch is also author of a three-volume systematic theology, which is translated into French (in five volumes) and does occasionally point to the relevance of non-human creatures, especially in the latter volumes (the third volume of the Serbian original was written and published more than 40 years after the first two, namely in 1932, 1935, and 1978 respectively). The translator of the English collection includes an apologetic note at the beginning of the deer article for its 'negative' tenor, although he feels no such need to apologise for or explain the virulently anti-European and anti-Western rhetoric of earlier pieces (2009:107).

can be said to be characteristic of Orthodox spirituality.<sup>106</sup> It is stressed in many influential writers, not only in Isaac but also in the classic *The Way of the Pilgrim*. Florovsky claims that such an ‘emphasis on an existential compassion’, especially in regard to the poor, is characteristic of the East (1974:135). Both Ware and Chrysavgis often cite Father Amphilochios of Patmos who said that ‘anyone who does not love trees does not love Christ’ (e.g. in Walker & Carras, 1996:82). Popovitch clearly sees no inconsistency in extending such compassion to animals and indeed highlighting their gentleness poetically as worthy of emulation and imitation or even as particularly close to the divine.

Such compassion which leads to harmony between creatures is understood as a consequence of Christ’s redemptive work and as an anticipation of the eschaton. Just as care for the poor and marginalised flows out of Great and Holy Pascha’s affirmation of life for all, so mercy and compassion more generally are a way of making manifest the new life Pascha proclaims. Earth and heaven are brought together in harmony. Although stated most explicitly in the liturgical texts for the Ascension, all liturgy brings together the celestial and the material. And this does not mean that humans are somehow miraculously removed from the earth, but rather heaven ‘bends down’ to earth. The spring imagery in the festal homilies and Paschal letters similarly envision this unification: the Paschal message is evident in and transforms the earth. Spring makes visible the newness of life worked by the resurrection. This newness affects all living beings. Humans do not escape the earth, but heaven and earth *come together*. This theme will return again and again in the liturgies of other feasts and thus will also be explored in subsequent chapters. It serves here as a first indication that the resurrection does indeed affect the whole cosmos and not merely humans. While it is not always clear that the liturgy’s frequent reference to the cosmos consciously *includes* non-human creatures, neither does it explicitly *exclude* them. Certainly the early homilists never exhort their listeners to exploit the ground, although they do occasionally speak of human superiority over or even domination of nature in the context of showing human uniqueness as the image of God (see next chapter). Rather, their inclusion of plants and animals in the Paschal rejoicing, as illustrated especially in the exuberance of spring, and their firm conviction that Christ’s life is for all (even if they primarily mean all humans), suggests that Christ’s death and resurrection do indeed affect and liberate *all* of creation.<sup>107</sup> To live in this resurrection and to celebrate it ‘today’ means to extend life to all and everywhere and to combat the powers of death wherever they are found.

The world into which the liturgical participant is introduced by the poetry of Pascha thus has implications for ecological practice: it means to combat death and to celebrate and contribute to life. Pollution, acid rain, dumping of nuclear and other toxic waste, atomic (and other) weapons, and especially climate change kill and devastate on an unprecedented scale. Ultimately they harm and even kill human beings but besides that they also murder thousands of other creatures and devastate ecosystems and biotic communities.

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<sup>106</sup> Popovitch himself claims this and stresses the themes of love and compassion repeatedly even in his more systematic work (e.g., 1997a:162-165).

<sup>107</sup> Argenti tentatively draws out such ecological implications: ‘The Church, therefore, is the assembly of the faithful whose vocation it is to implore God in the name of the Son, that He might send the Holy Spirit upon themselves and upon the world, that the world which we have polluted may be renewed and re-created, together with the universe and the



Ecological devastation directly contradicts the affirmation of life of the feast of Holy Pascha. In Pascha we celebrate the trampling of death as it is overcome by life. Living in the world opened by Pascha means to foster life and to rescue from death instead of contributing to further devastation. On the one hand, extinction of species and exploitation of the earth through human fault can never be justified by Christian principles, regardless how much the technology that produces it adds to human comfort and pleasure. And, on the other hand, the world of Pascha exhorts us to a transformed lifestyle that safeguards, celebrates, and contributes to the flourishing of life for all God's creatures. Sun and stars, mountains and hills, rivers and springs, trees and flowers, and all human and nonhuman animals are invited to join in this celebration of life.

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whole cosmos. And as light streams through a window, so does the Spirit of God stream through matter and transfigure it, for it was the creation in its totality that Christ came to renew' (2006:65).

## CHAPTER TWO

### **‘All of Creation Rejoices in You’: From Annunciation to Dormition**

#### 1.0 Introduction

The feasts of the Theotokos developed beginning with the celebration of the *Synaxis of the Theotokos* on the day after Nativity, probably starting in the fourth or fifth centuries.<sup>108</sup> Stories about her birth and life are relatively early (*The Protevangelium of James*), while accounts of her death did not emerge (at least in the mainstream tradition) until much later. The emperor Maurice (reg. 582-602) officially established a celebration of Mary's dormition in Constantinople on August 15th, which had been a day observed in her honour in some areas.<sup>109</sup> A concern to venerate Mary further than had already been the case probably also emerged as a result of the controversies surrounding the title *Theotokos* at the council of Ephesus in 431. The feast of the Annunciation, despite its biblical grounding, was one of the latest Marian feasts to receive a firm date in the calendar, although its theological association with March 25th is very early.<sup>110</sup> The major feasts associated with the Theotokos (although some are also treated liturgically as feasts of Christ) are as follows: (a) *The Birth of the Theotokos* (Sept. 8) which celebrates her miraculous birth by the barren Anna and Joachim, (b) *The Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple* (Nov. 21) which celebrates Mary's move to the temple at age three (where it is believed that she grew up in the Holy of Holies), (c) *The Meeting of Our Lord* (Feb. 2) which commemorates Mary and Joseph's sacrifice at the temple after Jesus' birth where they meet Symeon and Anna, (d) *The Annunciation of the Theotokos* (March 25) which celebrates Gabriel's annunciation of Christ's conception to Mary and her willing assent to this miracle,<sup>111</sup> and (e) *The Dormition of*

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<sup>108</sup> For an overview of the historical development of Marian feasts see the introduction provided by Ware (1998:38-97) and Mimouni (1995). There are also useful comments in Aubineau's introduction to the critical edition of Hesychius of Jerusalem's homilies. For a selection of early Patristic sources on Mary, see Gambero (1999; also Burghardt, 1955, 1957; Swanson, 2004). Much research on Marian feasts and texts was done by Catholic scholars surrounding the development of the dogma of the assumption and Mary's immaculate conception. At times they tend to read later questions and dogmas back into the sources.

<sup>109</sup> For a detailed examination of the emergence of this feast and the manuscript traditions surrounding Mary's death, see Shoemaker (2002).

<sup>110</sup> See Talley who argues that the date for nativity was calculated from the date of the annunciation assumed to be on the same date as the crucifixion (1991; also in Johnson, 2000:265-272). The feast of the Annunciation is a rather complicated liturgical celebration, as it usually falls within Great Lent and can even occur during Holy Week. The feast is always celebrated on March 25, even if it falls on Good Friday, but there are various instructions outlining exactly how this is to happen. See Ware's explanation (1998:435-437).

<sup>111</sup> Orthodox theology emphasises Mary's freedom and willing agreement. She was not coerced and her 'answer to the angel was not a foregone conclusion. She could have refused: she was not a passive instrument but an active participant, with a free and positive part to play in God's scheme of salvation' (Ware, 1998:61). Ware illustrates this with the dialogue between Mary and the angel Gabriel that is imagined as quite extensive in the liturgy (she is repeatedly portrayed as accusing Gabriel of deceit and wondering whether he is leading her astray; he applauds her 'prudence' in questioning him). He concludes 'when, on this and other feasts, the Orthodox Church shows honour to the Mother of God, it is not just because God chose her but also because she herself chose aright' (61). In fact, at times Mary is portrayed as more active than God in the liturgy: she receives the Son while 'the Father on High gives His consent' (445). Pelikan quotes Newman with approval who claimed that the Greek Fathers insisted that 'had Mary been disobedient or unbelieving of Gabriel's message, the Divine Economy would have been frustrated' (in Swanson,

*the Theotokos* (Aug. 15) which commemorates Mary's death or 'falling-asleep' and subsequent bodily assumption. The feast of the Nativity of Christ is also to some extent connected to the feasts of the Theotokos (she has a prominent place in the liturgical texts and the festal icon for this day) and includes the *Synaxis of the Theotokos* on December 26.<sup>112</sup>

As is true of Orthodox iconography and theology more generally, feasts of the Theotokos usually focus on the incarnation. As has often been pointed out, there is no separate 'Mariology' in the Eastern tradition. Mary is not considered separate from Christ.<sup>113</sup> There are few statements about Mary that constitute theological Marian reflection disconnected in any way from her role in the incarnation. Joseph Nasrallah, who analyses Mary's place in the Byzantine liturgy, examines the 'ordinary' liturgy celebrated every Sunday morning, highlighting especially various antiphons used within this liturgy (1954:45-65). Pelikan also points out the great role Mary plays even within the regular liturgy (in Swanson, 2004:1-18). He examines in detail the various phrases of the Sunday morning liturgy which mention the Theotokos and shows that veneration of the Theotokos is not in competition with worship of Christ, but that she is honoured as the first of saints who has become holy even as we are to live holy Christian lives as well.

Nasrallah goes on to consider briefly fourteen feasts and commemorations of the Theotokos, pointing out that the church year begins with a commemoration of the Theotokos on September 1 and ends with a similar feast of her on August 31. (Even if minor feasts and commemorations are excluded and one considers only the twelve major Orthodox feasts, the first and last of these are feasts of the Theotokos.) Her feasts

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2004:15). He also points out in respect to the apparently 'extravagant' hymns to Mary that she serves not as exception to but example for human freedom, 'the Annunciation of the Theotokos became in Byzantine theology the supreme case study of the mysterious relation between this predestinating divine choice and the inviolable human freedom expressed in her sublime confession and expression of faith in the Word of God' (14-15).

<sup>112</sup> Although there is some ambiguity about which feasts are feasts of Christ and which feasts of the Theotokos the feasts just listed will be treated together here, since their central theme, the incarnation, is the same. In the *Festal Menaion* Ware lists the five feasts mentioned above in a) – e) as feasts of the Theotokos (1998:41). Of course, as Theodorou points out, all feasts are ultimately christocentric (1981:258).

<sup>113</sup> Andronikof comments on this and suggests that a full mariology is developed in the liturgy. He rejects a 'sweetish pietism that reduces Mary to a crybaby lost in affliction or, conversely, to a Raphaelite queen floating with suaveness among the cherubs' (1988:272). It should also be pointed out that veneration of the Theotokos does not automatically imply anything about the positive treatment or status of women. Elizabeth Behr-Siegel explains that 'it would seem that in the western as in the eastern spheres of Christianity the promoters of Marian piety and theology have often, perhaps most often, been men' (2001:102). Although women have not been excluded from this entirely, 'nevertheless, even down to our time, one thinks of Christian women prohibited from preaching in the ecclesial assembly of the liturgy and unable to participate in the elaboration of Marian theology. This has been almost exclusively the business of men, of the clergy, who unconsciously perhaps have imprinted upon the theology of Mary their own dreams, their own vision of the ideal woman, a vision they combined with scorn or at the very least the second-class citizenship of real women within societies of a patriarchal form' (103). She censures both the extreme gap, one the one hand, between Mary and women that puts her on an unreachable pedestal and associates all other women with the sinner Eve and, on the other hand, the association of women with Mary as a model for submission and obedience (104). She reviews recent re-evaluations of the status of women in light of feminist objections who accord full personhood to women and yet reaffirm an essentially male priesthood, taking note of Father Hopko's book on *Women in the Priesthood* that reinforces gender inequality by arguing that male metaphors for God are more correct than female ones. Behr-Siegel also points out that Mary gave a free response to God's request (108). 'For Christian consciousness, the assumption of Mary does not mean the glorification of her femininity, that of the "eternal woman". An eschatological sign above and beyond history, she announces and anticipates the end, the meaning or *telos* for which humanity as a whole was created, namely the glorification of the creature when all is accomplished and completed, when God is "all in all"' (110-11). See also her essays 'Jesus and Women' and 'Women and Orthodoxy' which precede and follow this essay on 'Mary and Women', respectively.

therefore frame the church year. Although Nasrallah cites only isolated portions of these feasts and commemorations and his primary point in this treatment is to justify the immaculate conception, almost all of the texts he cites refer to creation in some way (1954:65-72). In a reflection on Mary's place in the liturgy, Doncoeur similarly points out that 'creation can have no other end than the glory of God' and that this is expressed within the liturgy (in Bogler, 1954:101). Employing the notion of human priesthood of creation he interprets redemption as a restoration of voice to the cosmos and claims that the feasts of the Theotokos show Mary in particular as the one who most performs this glorification of God in her life and song and draws all of creation (including the angels) into the praise of liturgical worship (ibid., 105-109). It is also interesting that nature is particularly associated with Marian feasts in other ways. In some areas imprisoned birds are freed on the Annunciation to signify the freedom and restoration of creation begun at this inception of the incarnation (Strotman in ibid., 73). At the Dormition in August flowers are commonly blessed.<sup>114</sup> It seems that the larger creation is not a peripheral theme in these feasts.

### 1.1 'World' opened by liturgy

The fundamental message of all feasts of the Theotokos and of the Nativity is the incarnation, the affirmation that God became flesh. As in all liturgical texts other theological insights are also present, but the incarnation is clearly the most important theme. The incarnation is central not only in the celebrations of the Annunciation and Nativity, but is taken up in the liturgies for the other Marian feasts as well. This is particularly obvious in the feast of her entry into the temple which employs the *katavasias* from the office of the Nativity celebration (celebrated on Nov. 21 it falls within the Nativity fast which extends for forty days before Nativity). Creation and redemption are closely linked in the liturgical texts. As Behr has argued, Eastern cosmology starts from the cross. He points out that March 25 was first celebrated as the day of the crucifixion and was simultaneously regarded as the day on which the world was created (2006:91). Showing close parallels between feasts of Christ and of Mary, he concludes:

These Marian feasts present a theological reflection on who Mary is and what she has done, made in the light of Christ's work of salvation: they are a confessional statement of faith, a theological reflection based upon Christ. In the scriptural descriptions of the Annunciation and the Nativity of Christ, and in the other liturgical celebrations of Mary, we are directed not to Mary herself, but to Mary as the one who received the Word and gave birth to Christ, and whose whole life is transfigured by this, and we are given all this as an exhortation for us also to receive the Word, standing firmly by the cross and putting on the identity of Christ. (130-131)<sup>115</sup>

According to Behr, incarnation and Pascha are closely related and draw on each other. Hopko also shows how this is true in his reflections on the nativity cycle which following Schmemmann he calls the 'winter Pascha' (1984:10-11; also Andronikof, 1970:96-97). Like Pascha, the mood of these feasts is predominantly one of celebration, joy and gratitude, although it is of a slightly different flavour than that at Pascha. While Nativity celebrates the dawning of the light, the beginning of salvation (and the feasts of the Theotokos largely foreshadow this), Pascha celebrates its accomplishment.<sup>116</sup> Ware speaks of the dominant mood of the Marian

<sup>114</sup> These are later developments and there are no references made to these traditions within the rubrics.

<sup>115</sup> He also points out the close connection made in the liturgy between Christ's 'tomb' and Mary's 'womb' (136).

<sup>116</sup> Rossum points to the connections between Pascha and nativity in his analysis of Romanos' nativity hymns (2000:99).

feasts (especially that of her nativity and entry into the temple) as one of anticipation (1998:52). The gratitude at the Annunciation, Nativity and the Meeting is for God's humbling to our situation, while the gratitude at Pascha is for a victory won.

## 1.2 Symbolism, Polyphony, Limit-Expressions

Like the Paschal liturgy, the liturgies for the feasts of the Theotokos and for Nativity exult in paradox. Their language throughout is excessive in order to stress the great condescension of the divine. Almost all references to the incarnation are put in stark contrasts between the transcendent and immutable divine and the fragile and weak human infant. They contrast Creator and creation, transcendent and immanent, incomprehensible and circumscribed, eternal and finite, giving of life and barrenness, power and weakness. For example, a vesperal sticheron at the Annunciation says: 'O marvel! God is come among men; He who cannot be contained is contained in a womb; the Timeless enters time; and, strange wonder! His conception is without seed, His emptying is past telling: So great is this mystery!' (443). At the Nativity the liturgy asks: 'How is He contained in a womb, whom nothing can contain? And how can He who is in the bosom of the Father be held in the arms of His Mother?' (Sessional Hymn, 268). Similar contrasts abound in most of these liturgies. Many of the festal texts and especially the homilies are characterised by imagined dialogue: between Anna and Joachim, Mary and Gabriel, Mary and Joseph, Mary and Elisabeth, Mary and Eve.<sup>117</sup> The dialogue, which was a popular stylistic measure, heightens the tension and grapples to some extent with the discordance present in the accounts (especially the pregnancies of a barren woman and of a virgin). It thus introduces elements of polyphony which enable the expression of the paradox of God's incarnation.

The heaviest symbolism in these feasts is that used for the Theotokos. She is depicted in countless images drawn from the Old Testament. These are heavily employed within the liturgical texts and many of the homilies. She is compared to stars and the sun, to a mountain and a tomb, a life-giving branch and the unconsumed bush, to a cloud of rain and to water, to an oyster and a 'luxuriant vine', a gate and the whole earth. As many of them are images drawn from nature, one may well wonder about their possible use for an ecological theology, especially as Mary is often seen as an 'icon' of all of creation. This is difficult, however, since ecofeminism has strongly censured the traditional association of women with nature (see Appendix I), which at first sight seems abundantly supported by this typology used for Mary. There is indeed lots of imagery for the Theotokos that compares her in various ways to other parts of creation. She is the 'bush springing from barren ground', 'fountain of life that gushes forth from the flinty rock', the 'life-giving branch', 'the mystical Paradise', a cloud dripping with life-giving rain, even a 'young heifer': 'Behold, the Virgin comes like a young heifer, bearing in her womb the fatted Calf that takes away the sins of the world. Let creation as it keeps feast rejoice exceedingly' (Forefeast, O4, 212). Especially prominent is the imagery of her opening Paradise, serving as a renewed temple or heaven. She 'shines more brightly than all the creation' (Entry, O3, 177) and is 'more spacious than the Heavens' (178). The most extensive imagery and symbolism

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<sup>117</sup> This is particularly true of Romanos' kontakia, but is preserved in many of the stichera and canons.

is found in the Akathist hymn which is theologically associated with the annunciation, but it now usually celebrated on the fifth Friday of Great Lent (which may or may not fall close to March 25; see Theodorou, 1981:305-320). Such comparisons are also very popular in the Patristic homilies. For example, Proclus describes her as follows:

The holy Mary has gathered us here;/(she is) the undefiled treasure of virginity,/the spiritual paradise of the Second Adam, the workshop of the union of the natures,/the market-place of the contract of salvation,/the bride-chamber in which the Word married the flesh,/the living bramble of nature, which the fire of the divine birth did not consume,/the truly light cloud that carried in her body the one who sits on the cherubim,/the purest fleece with the rain from heaven,/whereby the Shepherd has clothed himself with the sheep;/(she is) the maid and mother, the virgin and heaven,/the only bridge for God to mankind,/the awesome loom of the incarnation, on which was ineffably woven the role of union./The Holy Spirit acted as weaver thereof,/and the power that overshadowed (her) from on high was the worker,/and Adam's old covering of skin served as wool,/and the undefiled flesh from a virgin was the thread,/and the immeasurable grace of the one who wore it served as shuttle,/and the Word who entered through the ear was the artisan. (1.1, 63-64)<sup>118</sup>

Elizabeth Johnson especially has stressed the danger of much of this imagery (2004). She argues that, at least in Western theology, Mary has been elevated to a divine position (a feminine side of God) that separates her from the rest of humanity and she suggests instead that she should be returned to her status as 'sister' of believers. In fact, within Orthodox theology Mary is actually in many ways regarded as the 'first among equals' of the saints and thus as their sister and companion (see Andronikof, 1988:273-285). Fitzgerald examines several of the common Eastern titles for Mary and points out that

the Orthodox have always made it clear that there is an important distinction between our worship of God and the honour we give to Mary and the saints. Mary and the other saints are human persons. Worship (*latreia*) belongs to God alone. From the Orthodox point of view, veneration (*proskinesis*) or honour (*timi*) can rightly be offered to those human persons who are close to God. Therefore, we honour and fervently pray to those blessed, faithful departed who are alive in Christ, as our brothers and sisters. When we honour Mary and pray to her, we pray to her both as our Mother and our sister among the saints.... she is and always will be 'one of us'. She is a full member of the human community who fulfilled her particular vocation. (in Swanson, 2004:86)

He also stresses the importance of Mary's freedom in the annunciation (90-92) and her collaboration with God (94-97).<sup>119</sup>

### 1.3 Actions

Homilies for the feasts of the Theotokos tend to take the form of encomia and seldom exhort to specific action. Celebration is the only clear implication or exhortation to action.<sup>120</sup> While that may not amount to much, Proclus of Constantinople points out the importance of such celebration in a homily on the

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<sup>118</sup> Strotmann discusses the way in which Mary is portrayed as the 'new earth' (in Bogler, 1954:74). For an example of a very typological reading of the Eastern liturgy see Ledit (1976) and some of Bulgakov's homilies on Mary (2008a). Both Bulgakov and Evdokimov develop theological theories about masculinity and femininity in which Mary plays a prominent role. Like other Russian thinkers they tend to associate masculinity with Christ and femininity with the Spirit. Schmemmann speaks of the world as essentially feminine in his reflections on the Theotokos (2001:65-66). Behr-Sigel has been critical of some of these expositions. A fuller treatment of this issue is still necessary, but cannot be undertaken here.

<sup>119</sup> Due to the various difficulties involved, my argument here will not rely on the nature imagery for Mary. While I cannot explore this topic further here, my hunch is that although there are clearly problems with associating most of the natural imagery in the liturgies with a female figure, this is not simply an identification of women with nature and may well escape the charges made by many ecofeminists.

incarnation where he suggests that the singing of psalms ‘cuts away feelings of despondency’, ‘roots out pains’, ‘erases sorrows’, ‘deals with cares’, ‘soothes those in pain’, ‘causes sinners to repent’, and also has a whole host of positive effects like the building of monasteries and other pious acts, including filling ‘the church with people’ and sanctifying ‘the priest’ (2.1, 71).<sup>121</sup> Pious devotion to the Theotokos, as expressed by celebrating her feasts, was often also seen as a way to prevent various medical, social, economic, and political disasters. Jacob of Serug, for example, prays at the end of his homily on the Dormition: ‘O Son of God, by her prayers make your peace dwell/in heaven, in the depths, and among all the counsels of her sons./Make wars to cease, and remove trials and plagues;/bestow calm and tranquillity on seafarers./heal the infirm, cure the sick, fill the hungry;/be a Father to orphans whom death has left destitute’ (Hansbury:99). Germanos similarly prays for healing and protection from barbarian attacks (Cunningham:251). Here praise of and prayer to the Theotokos is envisioned to have very concrete and practical repercussions.

John of Kronstadt suggests that by celebrating such a feast we are to concentrate on the event that is being commemorated and learn from it, but also change our lives accordingly: ‘It is necessary to investigate the history of the event or person whose festival we solemnise, to approach it or him with our whole heart, to absorb them, so to say, into ourselves; otherwise the festival will be incomplete and not pleasing to God. The festivals ought to influence our life, to vivify and kindle our faith in future blessings, and maintain in us a pious and gentle disposition’ (1984:48). He condemns the revelry and ‘folly’ associated with false celebration. Photios tells us that the birth of the virgin ‘dispels mutual differences and quarrels, and brings together men of opposed opinion who have broken the bond of love by strife, by offering as it does the harmony of the chants as an invitation to the recall of concord’. Through ‘the unity of worship’ the feast ‘soothes and calms down those who are bitterly irritated with one another, persuading them to think with moderation and humanity’ (165). Philaret also exhorts his audience to imitate Mary and overcome anger (Homily XXIV). Cunningham comments on such exhortations as already present in the Patristic homilies: ‘Preachers call on their congregation to experience Biblical or apocryphal events as if they are happening today; at the same time, they expound the eternal significance of those events and their importance in God’s saving dispensation for humankind’ (2008:29). It has been argued, moreover, that these feasts also served to reinforce the doctrinal messages of the councils of the fourth and fifth centuries, combating the heresies of Arianism and Nestorianism (Andronikof, 1970:278; Kniazeff, 1979:180; Comings, 2005). There are not many explicit

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<sup>120</sup> Shoemaker suggests that the sudden emergence of dormition accounts at the end of the fourth century must have had certain reasons and that they played a crucial role in the larger cultural situation. He does not go on to specify, however, what he sees this role to be (he promises to explore this in a subsequent book which has not yet appeared).

<sup>121</sup> In a different homily on the Nativity he also points out how the celebration of feasts reduces pain and leads us to prayer and care for the poor (3.2, 82). Feasts ‘protect the soul from misfortune’ and ‘traffic in the salvation of human nature’ (3.3, 82). In contrast to pagan festivals, ‘the festivals of the Christians are divine and marvellous,/and truly sources and treasurers of salvation./For the *first* of our feasts proclaims God’s coming among mankind./And the *one thereafter* pictures symbolically the consecration of the waters and the womb of baptism./The *third* proclaims the good news/of the destruction of death,/the triumph of the cross,/the gift of resurrection,/and the liberation of our ancestors./The *fourth* proclaims the ascent into heaven of our first-fruits,/and the sitting at the right hand of God./The *fifth* heralds the descent of the Holy Spirit,/and the showers of a myriad gifts./These are the feasts the Lord created./Let us rejoice and find pleasure in them’ (3.4, 83). This also indicates that presumably at that time in Constantinople there were five main

references to these heresies in the feasts (they are much more obvious on the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy and on the Sundays commemorating the various ecumenical councils). In either case, if this connection is true, then the liturgies also serve a catechetical function. It is that much more significant, then, that they are the feasts in which creation is mentioned the most explicitly and the most frequently.

## 2. How is creation already present?

As the first part of the chapter has already suggested, creation is a fairly frequent theme in these feasts. One might divide the different ways in which non-human creatures or the larger cosmos are mentioned into three different emphases: First, an intimate connection is established between creation and incarnation in the texts. Second, a strong emphasis is placed on the participation of ‘all of creation’ in rejoicing over the incarnation. Third, it is implied (though less strongly than the previous two aspects) that the incarnation has cosmic significance and is accomplished for all of creation. These confirm and carry further the roles for creation already highlighted in the Paschal celebrations.

### 2.1 Creation & Incarnation

Creation and incarnation are linked in a dual fashion in these feasts. On the one hand, Christ’s ‘creation’ as a human being in the incarnation and his materiality are emphasised. On the other hand, the incarnation refers back to the Creator and affirms the essential connection between incarnation and creation.

First, the incarnation and in particular Mary’s role within it are read as affirmations of matter. Even in the theological tradition Christ’s real birth from Mary is often cited as a warning against various sorts of Docetist or Gnostic heresies which do not take seriously Christ’s embrace of flesh and matter by becoming incarnate within them. Mary is affirmed to be giving human flesh and created materiality to Christ. Mary is celebrated primarily for her role as the ‘Mother of God’ and the feasts honouring her employ this language throughout. The mystery of the incarnation is proclaimed in the aposticha at the Synaxis of the Theotokos: ‘A marvellous wonder has this day come to pass: nature is made new, and God becomes man. That which He was, He has remained; and that which He was not, He has taken on Himself while suffering neither confusion nor division. ... How shall I tell of this great mystery? He who is without flesh becomes incarnate; the Word puts on a body; the Invisible is seen; He whom no hand can touch is handled; and He who knows no beginning now begins to be’ (291). This central message of the Word’s incarnation is a constant theme in the liturgical texts.

Always, the essential materiality of the incarnation is stressed. There are many passages that emphasise this materiality, as in these lines from the feast of the Nativity: ‘The Word who before was wholly outside matter, in these last times has assumed the material substance of the flesh’ (O3, 272). There is great emphasis on Mary’s ‘material womb’, as at the Nativity of the Theotokos (O7, 119). The following ode affirms: ‘It is she who shall bear unto us the Word, appearing in the material substance of the flesh’ (121).

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Christian feasts celebrated: Nativity, Theophany, Pascha, Ascension and Pentecost. This may not be an exhaustive list,



Mary is consistently depicted as the one who gives flesh to the divine, as in the beginning of Annunciation vespers: ‘and I shall bear Him that is without flesh, who shall borrow flesh from me’ (440). In fact, it is far more often affirmed that God appeared in the flesh or in matter than that the divine became human. The full Greek title for Nativity actually is ‘the becoming/birth according to the flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ (Η ΚΑΤΑ ΣΑΡΚΑ ΓΕΝΝΗΣΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΚΥΠΙΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΘΕΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ ΗΜΩΝ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ)’. The incarnation is understood as a kenotic humbling: ‘O Sun, my Son, how shall I wrap Thee in swaddling clothes? How shall I give Thee milk, who givest food to all creation? How shall I hold Thee in my arms who holdest all things?’ (Forefeast, Matins Stichera, 217).<sup>122</sup> At the Nativity, the wise men are affirmed to have been ‘amazed to see neither sceptre nor throne but only utter poverty. For what is meaner than a cave, what is humbler than swaddling clothes? Yet therein shone forth the wealth of Thy divinity’ (Ypakoe, 272). Christ’s incarnation accomplishes salvation by uniting heaven and earth, which had been split apart by the fall. This is particularly obvious in the liturgy for the feast of the Nativity of Christ: ‘Heaven and earth are united today, for Christ is born. Today has God come upon the earth, and man gone up to heaven. Today for man’s sake is seen in the flesh He who by nature is invisible’ (Compline, Litya, 263). That this is indeed put in the context of creation is also supported by the fact that the first reading for the office of Nativity (as for Pascha and Theophany) is Genesis 1 (Vespers, 254).<sup>123</sup>

Secondly, the language of incarnation employed in these feasts strongly emphasises creation. God or the Trinity are consistently referred to as ‘Creator’ and there is much imagery that contrasts the ‘creation’ of Christ’s human flesh with his being the Creator. Often this is put in an explicit paradox, as during Nativity vespers: ‘Triumph, O Zion; make glad, O Jerusalem, city of Christ our God: receive the Creator who is contained within a cave and a manger. Open unto me the gates, and entering within I shall see as a child wrapped in swaddling clothes Him who upholds the creation in the hollow of His hand, whose praises the angels sing with unceasing voice, the Lord and Giver of Life who saves mankind’ (203). The Sixth Hour on the eve of the Nativity affirms that ‘our God and Creator has clothed Himself in created flesh, and He who with His strong arm fashioned the creation reveals Himself in the womb of her that He formed’ (238). It is repeatedly said in various of the festal liturgies that the Creator is ‘fashioned as a creature’ (e.g., during Annunciation Litya, 443). Throughout these texts, the entire Trinity is frequently referred to as ‘Master of Creation’. Yet quite often, Christ is explicitly identified as the Creator, as during Matins for the Meeting: ‘The Creator, having become a young child without undergoing change, has reshaped according to the form of His divinity our nature, taken from the earth and destined to return to earth once more’ (O3, 420). At times, Christ as Creator is even placed in contrast to the Father because he identifies more fully with creation through the

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however.

<sup>122</sup> Mary’s ‘swaddling clothes’ are also worthy of honour: ‘We venerate thy swaddling clothes, O Theotokos’ (Nativity of Theotokos, O9, 124).

<sup>123</sup> For an account of the importance of the biblical readings associated with the feasts, including some comments about the texts chosen for the newly instituted service of prayer for the environment on Sept. 1, see Lash in Cunningham & Theokritoff (2008:35-48). For an even fuller exploration of the role of Scripture in the liturgy see the collections on this topic based on the liturgical conferences at St. Sergius in 2001 and 2002 (Triacca & Pistoia, 2002; Braga & Pistoia, 2003).

incarnation: ‘The Master, by His coming in the flesh, has cut clean through The harsh enmity of the flesh against Him, And has destroyed the might of the murderer of our souls. Uniting the world to the immaterial essences, He has made the Father merciful to the creation’ (Nativity, O5, 275-76).

Patristic homilies similarly stress the incarnation and its affirmation of the material world. John Damascene in a homily on Mary’s birth sees all of creation connected to God through the incarnation (SC80:46-48).<sup>124</sup> Gregory Nazianzen makes an explicit link between creation and redemption in an early homily: ‘This is the origin of the nativity and of the virgin, the origin of the manger and of Bethlehem. The creation explains the nativity, the woman explains the virgin. The rationale for Bethlehem is Eden, the rationale for the manger is paradise. What is great and hidden is shown by what is little and visible’ (2.24, SC247:120-22). He expresses the condescension of the incarnation, which sanctifies the most lowly aspects of nature, in beautiful terms: ‘When he teaches on a mountain, when he converses in the plain, when he passes into a boat, when he reprimands the tempests. Maybe he accepts sleep in order to sanctify sleep; maybe he toils in order to sanctify the place; he weeps to render tears praiseworthy. He passes from one place to another, he who is contained in no place, he who is outside of time, who has no body, who is not circumscribed by limits’ (37.2, SC318:272-74).<sup>125</sup> Christ’s incarnation is a full embrace of the material condition.

Hesychius of Jerusalem actually refers to the feast of the purification (i.e., the Meeting) as the ‘feast of feasts’ or the ‘most holy feast among the holy feasts’ because ‘it recapitulates in fact the entire mystery of the Incarnation of Christ, it describes the entire presentation of the only Son. In this feast, Christ was carried as a new-born and confessed as God, the Creator of our nature has been offered in the arms as seated on a throne, and he offered a couple of spiritual turtledoves to Symeon and Anna’ (I.1, 25). He continues in language relying on Isaiah 40:12 and also employed by the liturgical texts: ‘He carried in his hands him who holds in his hand the inhabited and uninhabited earth, “he who has measured the water in his hand, the heavens with a span and the entire earth in a measure”’ (I.5, 35). For a different Marian feast, Hesychius imagines the Magi asking questions about the paradoxical nature of the miracle of Christ’s birth: ‘How does he who is perfect become a newborn? How does he who nourishes (the world) suck milk? How is he who embraces the universe enclosed in arms? How is “the Father of the age to come” become a baby? How does he who is on high find himself also below? How can he who is in the heavens be also on earth? ... How can “he who is in the womb of the Father” be in a crib?’ (VI.4, 199). Here the same contrast between mighty Creator and creaturely weakness is juxtaposed as in the liturgy.

Germanos, in a homily on the Annunciation, also draws an explicit connection between creation and redemption: ‘Hail, favoured one, who caused the Sun that is eternal to arise for the world in flesh, [a Sun] who dazzled the whole of creation with his goodness! Hail, favoured one, the all-bright cloud of the life-giving Spirit, which carries the rain of compassion and sprinkles all creation! Hail, favoured one, salvation of those

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<sup>124</sup> He exhorts earth and heaven to rejoice at this: ‘Happiness in the heavens! Exult the earth!’ (SC80:51). Winds, sky, earth and sea tremble as they announce ‘the salvation of the universe’ (SC80:57).

<sup>125</sup> He continues: ‘If he is a creature, is it not because he is concerned with his creature? If he is under time, is it not because he comes to visit those who are under time? When he supports all, he accepts all. What is there so surprising?’ (37.4, SC318:279).

born on earth, who transformed grief into joy, and joined the things on earth with those in heaven, and who loosed the dividing walls of enmity!’ (Cunningham:225). He continues by hailing Mary in various natural imagery by presenting a long dialogue between the angel and the Theotokos, where she only slowly assents (in contrast to Eve who quickly agrees to eat the fruit), followed by a dialogue between Mary and (a very doubtful) Joseph. He concludes with another connection between incarnation and paradise, creation and new creation: ‘This one, the ever flourishing and incorruptible paradise, in which the Tree of life was planted and produced without hindrance the fruit of immortality for everyone! This one, a bringing forth of the new creation in which the water of life gushes!’ (245). Ephrem the Syrian in a homily on Nativity employs the same sorts of contrasts: ‘He who measures the heavens with the span of his hand/lies in a manger a span’s breadth;/He whose cupped hands contain the sea/is born in a cave;/His glory fills the heavens/and the manger is filled with His splendour’ (1983:63).<sup>126</sup> Proclus uses similar language in a homily on the same subject: ‘Let me utter the mystery!/Though he is God, “he appeared on earth” (Bar 3:38),/and came to dwell through the virgin where he was present./And the birth did not belittle him,/and the birth pains did not change his uncreated nature,/but created form gave a form to the Creator,/and the world contained the uncontainable when he became flesh,/when he became man without sin’ (2.4, 73). In an encomium on the Dormition attributed (probably falsely) to Modestus, Mary is presented as life and spring of the world because the ‘fountainhead of the universe’ was born of her (Daley:84). The homilist concludes that Christ ‘has, through her, set creation free from slavery, and has brought into reality surpassing joy for the whole cosmos’ (85). These themes of joy and liberation of the cosmos are evident also in the liturgical texts themselves.<sup>127</sup>

Creation and incarnation are then closely linked to each other. It is the Creator who becomes incarnate as a creature. This incarnation is an affirmation of the flesh and of matter. Christ has a truly material body and his birth from a human mother confirms his full identification with the creation. Yet while an emphasis on

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<sup>126</sup> He goes on to establish a link between creation and incarnation. Mary brings new life to the creation: ‘Again, she is the new heaven,/in which there dwells the King of kings;/He shone out in her and came forth into creation,/formed and clothed in her features./She is the stem of the cluster of grapes,/she gave forth fruit beyond nature’s means,/and He, though His nature bore no resemblance to her/put on her hue and came forth from her,/She is the spring, whence flowed/living water for the thirsty,/and those who have tasted its draught/give forth fruit a hundred fold./Therefore this day resembles/the first day of creation:/on that day created things were established,/on this, the earth is renewed,/and because of Adam it is blessed/having been cursed because of him./Eve and Adam through sin/introduced death into the created world;/creation’s Lord gave us, by His Only-begotten/through Mary, new life again’ (1983:66).

<sup>127</sup> Bulgakov draws similar connections between creation and incarnation in a homily on the Annunciation where he analyses the colour blue used for feasts of the Theotokos and suggests that ‘the light-blue depths of the sky are a direct image of God’s creation: that which did not exist received the light of being, the creative Word; and this nothing became the world, the creation of God. And upon this creation reposes God’s love, and beams of grace flow into it. The light-blue sky is the image of the gracious illumination of the creature, of that deification by virtue of which the nothingness of the creature is clothed in the beauty of Divine Glory. And in this dense, coalesced azure, lights begin to shine which are ignited from the one Light of lights. The azure of the sky symbolises God’s condescension toward the world, creation’s reception of God’s gifts, God’s meeting with the creature. The world is preserved by God’s power, and streams of Divine love unceasingly flow into it. The world is created for the sake of man, and man is created for deification. And all things that take place in the life of the world have significance as a preparation for the full sanctification of man’ (2008a:79-80). He concludes that ‘the world became different after the Annunciation. Heaven and earth, the divine and the human, essences that had been separate, were united; and men received the power to become gods according to grace, for God had become man. The creation of the world and of man was actualised fully for the first time, and reached its inner completion. The Spirit of God that moved over the face of the waters descended into the creaturely essence; the conception of the Son of God and the Son of Man was accomplished’ (86).

flesh and materiality is certainly important for a more positive attitude towards nature, it does not yet explicitly affirm that this goes beyond an affirmation of *human* flesh and materiality. What role, if any, do other creatures play in these liturgies?

## 2.2 All creatures praise God

Creation actually has a significant role within the liturgy as participating in the worship of God and the veneration of the Theotokos. In countless repetitions, creation is said to ‘glorify’ or ‘bring praises’ either to God for the miracle of the feast or even to the Theotokos herself. The idea that all of creation rejoices is a constant theme: ‘Therefore in praise let us sing: Let the whole creation bless the Lord and exalt him above all for ever’ (Entry, O8, 190). The forefeast of the Nativity similarly exhorts: ‘Let the creation rejoice exceedingly: for the Creator now makes Himself to be created, and He who was before all things now makes Himself known as God newly revealed’ (O9, Compline, 209). Often Christ’s descent into creation is linked to creation’s celebration of this mystery, as is especially the case for the Nativity liturgies: ‘Thou hast made the whole creation shine with joy. All that hath breath praises Thee, the Image of the glory of the Father’ (Nativity, Stichera, 254). ‘The whole creation leaps with joy, for the Saviour and Lord is born in Bethlehem’ (Nativity Compline, Litya, 264). ‘Therefore let all creation sing and dance for joy, for Christ has come to restore it and to save our souls’ (ibid., 266). Unlike the more ambivalent references to ‘all of creation’ in the Paschal liturgies, here the phrase ‘creation’ indeed seems to refer clearly to non-human creation, although it certainly does not exclude humans.

Sometimes the phrase ‘Let the whole creation bless the Lord and exalt Him above all for ever’ is used as a refrain, similar to the way in which it is employed by the song of the three children.<sup>128</sup> Creation joins in praise with the Theotokos, the saints, and the assembled people. The ikos at the Synaxis of the Theotokos makes this particularly clear: ‘Therefore all of creation shares in my joy and cries to me: Hail, thou who art full of grace’ (293). The whole world joins together in song: ‘today all creation greatly rejoices... Today the proud insolence of the serpent is brought low, for the fetters of the curse laid on our forefathers are loosened. Therefore with all the world we cry aloud to thee: Hail, thou who art full of grace’ (Annunciation, Sessional Hymn, 446). The creation glorifies not merely God but also Mary. She is the one ‘whose praises all creation sings’ (Nativity of Theotokos, O9, 124). The creation rejoices in her birth as it does in that of the Creator: ‘From the root of Jesse and from the loins of David, Mary, the Child of God, is born to us today, and the whole creation is made new and godlike, Rejoice together, heaven and earth: praise her, ye kindreds of nations’ (Nativity of Theotokos, Sessional Hymn, 108). Over and over it is affirmed that ‘the whole creation calls thee blessed’ (Nativity of Theotokos, O3, 113).

In these feasts various specific beings and parts of creation are explicitly named, such as ‘the heavens’ (referring here to the sky, not the abode of God or angels), ‘the seas’, ‘mountains, hills, hollows, rivers and seas, and the whole creation’, ‘all the earth’, ‘every creature’, ‘the depths’ (probably including ‘sheol’ or the

abode of the dead). Earth and sea rejoice: ‘Be joyful, all the earth... Be glad, O sea...’ (Forefeast, Nativity, O8, 215). Heaven and earth join equally into song: ‘Greatly rejoice, O heaven; be glad, O earth’ (Nativity, Sessional Hymn, 272). ‘Heaven and earth rejoice, beholding the spiritual Heaven, the only Virgin without blemish...’ (Entry, Aposticha, 170). Mountains and rivers celebrate together with human dignitaries: ‘Let the kings of the whole earth sing rejoicing, and let the companies of the nations be in exceeding joy. Mountains and hills and hollows, rivers and seas, and the whole creation, magnify the Lord who now is born’ (Forefeast, Nativity, O9, 216). Various celestial bodies also sing: ‘Thou who coverest Thy high places with the waters, and settest the sand as a bound to the sea, Thou who dost compass all things, the sun sings Thy praises, the moon gives Thee glory, every creature offers its hymn unto Thee, its Author and Creator, for ever’ (Nativity of Theotokos, O8, 122). Furthermore, in the celebration of nativity, various parts of creation (including humans) are imagined as contributing gifts to celebrate Christ’s birth: ‘What shall we offer Thee, O Christ, who for our sake hast appeared on earth as man? Every creature made by Thee offers Thee thanks. The angels offer Thee a hymn; the heavens a star; the Magi, gifts; the shepherds, their wonder; the earth, its cave; the wilderness, the manger: and we offer Thee a Virgin Mother’ (Nativity, Stichera, 254). Various creatures then play an active role in the glorification of God accomplished within the liturgy. All creatures join together in the liturgical chorus. And, indeed, not only does the whole creation participate in praise, but the manner of this rejoicing is depicted in vivid detail. Creation is portrayed as praising, singing, ‘leaping with joy’, clapping hands, ‘rejoicing exceedingly and raising its voice’, ‘keeping feast’, ‘blessing the Lord’, being amazed’, ‘rejoicing greatly’, even ‘dancing’ (e.g., Nativity of Theotokos, O1, 111). This is not just mentioned once or twice, but a strong theme in all the texts. Creation clearly plays a role in the liturgy and God enjoys its praise. One might even suggest that human praise is guided by this prior praise of nature. ‘Heaven, earth, and the depths stand in awe of Thee, men bless Thee, fire is Thy servant, all things created obey Thee in fear, O Holy Trinity’ (Nativity of Theotokos, O8, 122). Heaven and earth are consistently seen as closely associated instead of being in contrast to each other.

Again this rejoicing of creation in the liturgical texts is confirmed by many homilies. In fact, this is probably the strongest theme in the Patristic homilies on Mary. In a homily on Nativity (still called Theophany at the time), Gregory Nazianzen exhorts us to join the animals and other figures in the nativity story in gratitude:

Venerate the manger, at which you, an animal without reason were nourished by the Word. Like an ox, recognise your owner... like an ass, know the manger of the Lord himself: whether you are one of the clean beasts, subject to the Law, who chew on the cud of the word and are fit for sacrifice, or whether you are still unclean and unsuited to be food or victim, from the Gentile race. Run with the star; bring gifts, with the Magi, of gold and frankincense and myrrh—gifts for your king, for your God, for the one who became a corpse for your sake! Give glory with the shepherds, sing praise with the angels, dance with the company of archangels! Let there be a common festival for the powers of heaven and earth! For I believe that they, too, are rejoicing and holding festival along with us today, if it is true that they are friends of both humanity and God. (38.17, Daley:126)

Proclus also imagines the various actors who offer praise in a Nativity homily, including explicitly various non-human participants together with the human characters in the story:

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<sup>128</sup> For example, in ode eight at Nativity (280). This occurs fairly often in the eighth ode (of several feasts), since this ode

Today the unsown seed sprouted forth from the field not cultivated,/and the famished world rejoices./Today a birth without intercourse blossomed forth from the womb without birth pains,/and the whole of creation offers gifts to the fatherless child:/the earth offers the manger;/the rocks offer the water urns of stone;/the mountains offer the cavern;/the cities offer Bethlehem;/the winds offer obedience;/the sea offers subjection;/the waves offer calmness;/the depths offer the fishes;/the fishes offer the water;/the waters offer the Jordan;/the fountains offer the woman from Samaria;/the desert offers John;/the beasts offer the foal;/the birds offer the dove... (4.3, 88-90).<sup>129</sup>

In fact, Proclus often refers to the praise of all creation. In a different homily on the Nativity he employs the phrase 'let heaven rejoice from above' (quoted from Ps. 71:6) as a sort of repeated refrain for a good section of the homily (24.2-8, 103-104).

John Damascene also exhorts earth and mountains to rejoice: 'Acclaim the Lord, all the earth, sing, exult, play instruments!'; 'Jump with joy, mountains' (SC80:61).<sup>130</sup> In fact, he often invites creation to join in praise in his Marian homilies.<sup>131</sup> Andrew of Crete also frequently speaks of the rejoicing of all of creation. In his first homily on the Nativity of the Theotokos he says: 'Let all creation therefore sing and dance and let it introduce with this something of those things worthy of the day! Let there be one common festival today of heavenly and earthly things and let every compound structure<sup>132</sup> that exists both on earth and in a heavenly manner join in the feasting! For today the created precinct of the Creator of all things has been established, and the creature is newly prepared as divine abode for the Creator'. In the third homily he exhorts heaven to be glad and tells the earth to dance, claiming that the earth has been raised by Mary's pregnancy as the water is sanctified by Christ's baptism. He reiterates, 'so then, let all creation rejoice and dance and clap its hands!' In his third homily on the Dormition, he similarly invites heaven and earth to join in song: 'let the whole festal company of heaven and earth join with us today and complete for me the funeral hymn... Sing, O heavens! Give praise, you who are born of earth!... Clap your hands, O earth!' (Daley:145-146). Theodore the Studite in an encomium on the Dormition has 'the whole of creation jump for joy' and describes Mary as a life-giving spring for the whole creation (Daley:250). John of Thessalonica, in one of the earliest homilies on the Dormition, connects the praise of creation with its renewal in the incarnation: 'A fitting hymn of honour,

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is based on the song of the three children which employs this phrase (and indeed is full of the praise of creation).

<sup>129</sup> He continues in a similar vein for several more stanzas. In an encomium on Mary, he imagines the reaction of creation even more vividly: 'The sea could not bear the sound;/the clouds have with trepidation become a vehicle for his ascension;/the sun, not able to endure the insolence, shuddered./Hades vomited forth the dead amidst fear;/the porters of Hades saw and stood frightened;/the mountain, when it received his steps, became covered in smoke;/the bramble, having been unable to endure the vision, was kindled./"The Jordan was frightened and turned (its waters) backwards" (Ps 113:3);/the sea, frightened before the rod, was cleft in two,/and was made calm again because of the prefiguration of the Lord;/the staff of Aaron blossomed contrary to nature on account of the prefiguration;/the furnace in Babylon stood in awe before the number of the Trinity./Count these miracles then,/and admire the victory of the virgin,/because she alone inexplicably served as bride-chamber for him, whom the whole creation praised with fear and trepidation' (5.2, 93-94).

<sup>130</sup> He does go on, however, to identify the mountains with 'reasonable natures' who should pursue 'spiritual contemplation' (61). In his *Orthodox Faith* he suggests that the exhortation for earth and heaven to rejoice is actually directed at human beings and angels, because the heavens are inanimate (II.6, FC:214).

<sup>131</sup> 'Today breezes have begun to blow, foretelling universal joy. Let the heavens rejoice on high and let the earth exult; let the sea of the world be shaken! (Ps 95.11). For an oyster is born in her, the one who will conceive in her womb from the heavenly lightning-flash of divinity and will bear the pearl of great price, Christ. From her the King of glory, putting on the purple [robe] of flesh and having dwelt among them will proclaim deliverance to the captives. Let nature skip [for joy]: for the ewe-lamb, from whom the Shepherd will clothe the sheep and tear off the tunics of ancient mortality, is born' (Cunningham:58); 'Skip, mountains, rational natures, reaching up to the height of spiritual contemplation! For the most manifest mountain of the Lord is born, which surpasses and transcends every hill and every mountain' (Cunningham:61).

praise and glory is always due, from every creature under heaven, to that remarkable, all-glorious and truly great mistress of all the world, the ever-virgin Mother of our Saviour and God Jesus Christ. She is truly the God-bearer, and through her all creation has received, by God's saving plan, the great gift of the presence in the flesh of the only Son and Word of God the Father' (Daley:47).<sup>133</sup> Jacob of Serug beautifully imagines the praise of various creatures in Homily V on the Dormition:

The evil demons were disturbed and agitated,/for they saw the sign which only happened because of our Lord./They saw heaven discharging multitudes of hosts/and the air was utterly sanctified with sweet fragrance./New sounds were heard from all the birds;/which were chanting in ranks according to their natures./All living creatures made a joyful sound of praise in their places;/all the earth was stirred by their shouts of joy./The heavens and the mountains and all the plains which were adorned,/broke forth in praise when the virginal body was being laid in the grave./All living creatures made a joyful sound of praise in their places;/all the earth was stirred by their shouts of joy./All trees with their fruits and produce/were sprinkled with dew, the sweet fragrance of their gladness./All the flowers which were beautiful in their variety, sent forth perfume like sweet spices sending forth fragrance./The waters and the fish and all creeping things within the sea,/were aware of this day and were moved to praise./All creatures silent or eloquent,/according to their natures rendered the praise which was due. (Hansbury:96)

Thus in many Patristic texts non-human creatures participate in the events of the incarnation. The homilists draw on biblical texts to personify various aspects of creation, but also elaborate on this imagery creatively. In these homilies, the whole cosmos is painted as actively engaged in God's praise and has a vested interest in the mystery of the incarnation.

Contemporary authors also occasionally comment on this. Bulgakov in a sermon on the Nativity suggests that the animals present are significant: 'The ox and the ass at the crib, animals toiling with man for the sake of man, in their innocence of sin had deviated less from their primordial purpose than fallen man, their master. The Lord preferred the mute animals to the proud and vain words of the wisdom of this world with its pomp and arrogance' (2008a:26). Relying on the *kontakion* of the feast, he sees all of nature (earthly, human, and angelic) responding to the nativity of Christ: 'God's creation could not have failed to be shaken in its depths; it could not have failed to feel the Bethlehem birth: nature, the human race, and the angelic assembly all venerated the Infant. The celestial lights saw Him, for in their heavenly choir they recognised a new star: the star of Bethlehem. This star was nature's response to what was taking place.' He goes on to list various 'natural' responses of the cave, the animals, and the angels (2008a:27). For him also, all creatures respond to the incarnation and rejoice at Christ's coming. Schmemmann similarly comments on the *kontakion*: 'The profound significance of this remarkable hymn is that the world and all of creation do not merely thirst for union with God or wait for his coming: they prepare for it' (2001:33).<sup>134</sup> Theokritoff agrees: 'All creation rejoices at the coming of the Saviour because it is an event of cosmic significance' (2009:163). What is this cosmic significance? Ware suggests in the introduction to the festal liturgies (in regard to the nativity of the Theotokos) that it refers to the redemption of all of creation: 'In Mary's case, however, the parents' rejoicing

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<sup>132</sup> The editor claims in a footnote, however, that the 'compound structure' refers to humans.

<sup>133</sup> This theme is picked up in a later homily on the Dormition (attributed to Modestus): 'O most blessed dormition of the glorious Mother of God, through whom all things are renewed, and things on earth are united to those in the heavens, crying out with them in praise' (Daley:91).

<sup>134</sup> Hopko says that 'the entire order of nature participates in the announcement of Christ's birth, thus revealing itself as God's creation' (1984:127).

is shared by all creation, for her birth foreshadows the universal salvation that is to come' (1998:46). What do the liturgies say about such a cosmic view of redemption?

### 2.3 Cosmic redemption

The liturgy does indeed suggest that the incarnation has an impact on all of creation. Creation is changed by it and restored to full communion with God. Not just humans are redeemed, but all of creation. There are several different ways in which this can be said to be the case. First, the incarnation is seen as a new beginning for all of life. The world has been renewed already in the birth of the Theotokos as it anticipates Christ's birth and redemption: 'She is born and with her is the whole world become new again (Γεννᾶται τοίνυν, καὶ ὁ κόσμος σὺν αὐτῇ ἀνακαινίζεται)' (Nativity of Theotokos, Aposticha, 107). This eschatological imagery is also present in the feast of the Annunciation. Although here Christ's becoming flesh is celebrated, Mary is also hailed as the one in whom creation is renewed: 'Hail, thou Womb of the divine incarnation. Hail, thou through whom the creation is made new: Hail, thou through whom the Creator becomes a newborn child' (Annunciation, Ikos, 454). This renewal of creation is a theme repeated by almost all Marian feasts.

Second, as at the Ascension, the incarnation in general and the Theotokos in particular are said to 'join earth and heaven'.<sup>135</sup> The imagery of a bridge is often used and heaven is said to 'bend down' and touch the earth.<sup>136</sup> This causes 'things on earth to be set right' and sanctified. This language is especially strong in the feast of the Dormition where the Theotokos is affirmed to be the 'firstfruits' of creation having reached the eschaton in some fashion: 'What spiritual songs shall we now offer thee, O most holy? For by thy deathless Dormition thou hast sanctified the whole world, and then has been translated to the places above the world, there to perceive the beauty of the Almighty and, as His Mother, to rejoice in it exceedingly' (Stichera, 504). The Dormition transfigures the world and restores it to life: 'Come, all ye ends of the earth, let us praise the most holy Translation of the Mother of God: for she has delivered her spotless soul into the hands of her Son. Therefore the world, restored to life by her holy Dormition, in radiant joy celebrates this feast with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs together with the angels and the apostles' (Litya, 509). She is the 'earthly Heaven' who brings together both earth and heaven: 'Come, O ye people, and gaze in wonder: for the holy Mountain of the Lord, in the sight of all, is exalted above the hills of heaven. The earthly Heaven takes up her dwelling in a heavenly and imperishable land' (O4, 517). Earth and heaven are brought together through the Theotokos via the child she bears.

At times the connection between praise and redemption are made explicit: 'At thy glorious Dormition the heavens rejoice and the armies of angels exult; the whole earth makes glad, singing a hymn of departure to

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<sup>135</sup> Jeanlin points this out in regard to the feast of the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple, stressing also the eschatological character of the feast: 'The liturgy is situated in the time of the Resurrection, from which derives the eschatological attitude so particular to the liturgy for which time (present, past and future) intersects with eternity and for which the earth is united with the heavens. This is why the child which enters into the temple of God is already hymned as "the temple who receives the Saviour"' (2007:256).



thee, O Mother of Him who is Lord of all... “Hail, thou bearer of the whole divinity: hail, thou who alone by thy childbirth hast brought together earthly things and things on high”. ... By thy holy Dormition, O Virgin Mother and Bride of God, thou who gavest birth to the Life hast been transported into immortal life, attended by angels, principalities, and powers, by apostles, prophets, and the whole creation’ (Matins Stichera, 525). Similar language is used at the Annunciation: ‘Lo, our restoration is now made manifest to us: God is ineffably united to men. At the words of the Archangel error is laid low; for the Virgin receives joy, and the things of the earth have become heaven. The world is loosened from the ancient curse. Let the creation rejoice exceedingly and raise its voice to sing: O Lord, our Maker and Deliverer, glory to Thee’ (Compline, Aposticha, 445). Earth is freed, delivered, made whole, sanctified.

On occasion, it is explicitly affirmed that ‘the whole creation is made new and godlike’, always linked with the earth’s rejoicing in this renewal. Mary is made manifest ‘through whom things on earth are joined with heaven’. Consequently (and repeatedly), ‘today is the beginning of joy for all the world’ (Nativity of Theotokos, Stichera, 101). Although it is Mary who enters into heaven, she takes the whole earth with her in some fashion: ‘For today is heaven opened wide as it receives the Mother of Him who cannot be contained. The earth, as it yields up the Source of life, is robed in blessing and majesty... Forget not, O Lady, thy ties of kinship with those who commemorate in faith the feast of thine all-holy Dormition’ (Dormition, Litya, 509). This has implications for the fertility of the earth. Given the strongly typological use of characters in the liturgy, this is often represented by Anna’s pregnancy with Mary after her long barrenness. Imagery of nature and ground is used to contrast Anna’s barrenness with the new fruitfulness made possible in Mary’s birth: ‘Husbandman of our thoughts and gardener of our souls, Thou hast made the barren earth fertile. Thou hast turned the ground that once was parched into fruitful land, rich in corn and bearing fruit. From holy Ann Thou hast made to blossom an undefiled fruit, the Theotokos’ (Nativity of Theotokos, O8, 122). Similarly: ‘The soil which formerly was barren gives birth to fertile ground, and nourishes with milk the holy fruit sprung from her sterile womb. Dread wonder: she who sustains our life, who received within her body the Bread of Heaven, feeds at her mother’s breast’ (Nativity of Theotokos, Stichera, 99). Here clearly eschatological imagery is implied as a restoration of fruitfulness after the experience of the barren desert.<sup>137</sup>

This newness of creation is envisioned in terms of beauty: ‘Let the creation now cast off all things old, beholding Thee the Creator made a child. For through Thy birth Thou dost shape all things afresh, making them new once more and leading them back again to their first beauty’ (Forefeast of Nativity, O4, 212). Not always is ‘creation’ the term used, at times the liturgy speaks of ‘nature’. There is no clear distinction here between ‘human nature’ and the rest of nature. In fact, imagery that speaks of the restoration of nature in

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<sup>136</sup> The ascension traverses the bridge in the opposite direction. While the incarnation brings heaven to earth, the ascension carries earth into heaven. Both serve to link earth and heaven.

<sup>137</sup> See also the following texts: ‘She is the restoration of Adam and the recalling of Eve, the fountain of incorruption and the release from corruption’ (Nativity of Theotokos, Litya, 105); ‘At her prayers, O Christ our God, send down peace upon the world and on our souls great mercy ... let things on earth put on their bright array... let the whole world keep feast’ (Nativity of Theotokos, Aposticha, 106). ‘At the behest of the Almighty Maker of all, a fruit has shone forth from a barren womb, that has wholly ended the world’s barrenness in good. Ye mothers, dance with the mother of the Theotokos

terms of a renewed paradise is employed quite often. This clearly has eschatological overtones and is not merely a ‘recovery’ of the pre-fall garden, although it is often put in the context of the world being ‘loosened from the ancient curse’. Mary is said to turn the earth again into a paradise: ‘Going to dwell in the tomb, she made it a paradise. Standing beside this tomb today, we sing with joy: O ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord and exalt Him above all for ever’ (Dormition, O8, 523). Mary’s tomb in this feast of the Dormition recalls the cave in Bethlehem, which is repeatedly also said to restore paradise (Nativity, Ikos, 278).

The phrase ‘bestowing salvation on all who sing thy praises’ is also employed frequently. For example, the irmos from ode five during Annunciation Matins may seem to refer only to human ‘chanters’: ‘the whole world was amazed at thy divine glory: for thou, O Virgin hast not known wedlock, hast held in thy womb the God of all, and hast given birth to an eternal Son, who rewards with salvation all who sing thy praises’ (452). Yet, as creation is frequently affirmed to be singing God’s praises (as established in the previous section), surely by implication, all of creation must be included in salvation as well. One may therefore argue that redemption is bestowed on all of creation (especially as the two affirmations occur within lines—or seconds—of each other). Not only does the incarnation affirm the sanctity and goodness of material flesh, not only does all of creation (human and non-human) rejoice in the liturgy and praise the Trinity, but indeed all of creation is redeemed and restored to communion with God in the eschaton, which is already present within the liturgical celebration.

This is further confirmed by some of the Patristic homilies, although they seldom address this theme explicitly. Leontius in a homily on the Nativity lists its many effects, including the restoration of paradise and a recreation of the earth:

Many and innumerable are the God-loving celebrations of the Christians. But what is more worthy of celebration than the present one, because Christ the Master has been born and the world has been reborn? Christ has been born and Adam has been recalled. Christ has been born and Eve has been ransomed from grief. Christ has been born and the snake has disappeared. Christ has been born and paradise has been restored. Christ has been born and the devil has been condemned. Christ has been born and Hades has been changed. Christ has been born and the earth has been recreated. Christ has been born and the air has been purified. Christ has been born and heaven has been gladdened. (XII.1, 172)

Christ’s birth recreates and purifies the natural elements. Even hell is changed by it. Romanos also imagines some impact on the cosmos in his hymns for the Nativity: ‘Saviour, save the world: that is why you have come. Restore your whole work: this is why you shine before me, before the wise men and before all of creation’ (SC110:77). Mary is assured by Christ that she ‘will see me revive and renew the earth and all the children of the earth’ (SC110:111). In a homily on the Annunciation, Andrew of Crete speaks of the divine plan which includes the renewal of the universe: ‘Today the Source of all authority, who made all things, brings his plan, which he worked out in advance for the creation of everything in existence, to its goal, in order that he may prevent the plan that was devised for us from the beginning by the founder of evil. For this reason angels dance, human beings rejoice, and the whole universe is renewed and restored to itself’

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and cry: “Hail, thou who art full of grace: the Lord is with thee, granting great mercy to the world through thee” (Nativity of Theotokos, Matins Stichera, 126).

(Cunningham:198). Since human beings and the universe are here listed separately, one may safely assume that this does indeed refer to the cosmos and not only to humans.

The Dormition makes effects on the earth by far the most explicit. Andrew of Crete suggests in his first homily on the Dormition that Christ renews ‘the whole of what he had taken from us’ (Daley:112). While this might imply only human flesh, in the second homily he specifies that ‘the saving Word... who subsists in himself above all being yet has lived out on earth, in flesh, the whole of God’s plan for our sakes... has now filled heaven and earth with glory, and has made all creation rich with his sacred splendour’ (Daley:117). In the third homily he describes Mary’s body as ‘the body that has filled all creation with the fragrant myrrh of holiness’ (Daley:138). It is ‘the first-fruit of God’s communion with his creation, of his identification, as maker of all things, with what he has made’ (Daley:139). John Damascene interprets the Dormition as sanctifying the elements of air and ether: ‘The air was blessed by your passing through it, the ether of the upper regions was sanctified’ (Daley:196). In his second homily he engages in an extended imaginative portrayal of the effects of Mary’s body on other elements:

And what happened next? I imagine that the elements of nature were stirred up and altered, that there were sounds, crashes, rumblings, as well as remarkable hymns from angels who flew before her, providing her with an escort and with companions on the way... The air, the fiery ether, the sky would have been made holy by the ascent of her spirit, as earth was sanctified by the deposition of her body. Even water had its share in the blessing: for she was washed in pure water, which did not so much cleanse her as it was itself consecrated. Then the deaf received perfect hearing again, the feet of the lame had their power to walk restored; sight was renewed in the blind, and the writ of condemnation was torn up for sinners who approached in faith. (Daley:214-215)

Here all the elements are sanctified, purified, made holy, and blessed by Mary’s ascent. Theodore the Studite picks up on this theme of blessing and expects concrete results from it: ‘O burial of the bearer of light, life and the gift of endless incorruption! As you rise through the clouds on your way to heaven, as you enter the holy of holies with cries of joy and praise, O Mother of God, remember to bless the bounds of this earth. By your intercession temper the air, give us rain in due season, rule over the winds, make the earth fruitful, give peace to the Church, strengthen orthodox faith, defend the Empire, ward off the barbarian tribes, protect the whole Christian people’ (Daley:256). Mary’s blessing, for him, influences the weather and the fertility of the earth.

Thus the incarnation celebrated in these feasts is affirmed to have a real impact on the entire cosmos. Not only does Christ hallow human flesh and corporeality by assuming it, but he also sanctifies and renews the whole creation. Materiality and corporeality in general is assumed and purified by the incarnation. And non-human characters participate more explicitly in these feasts than is the case in the liturgies of Pascha and Pentecost, maybe because of the central affirmation of the incarnation in them. Most fundamentally, the incarnation serves to bring together earth and heaven. The divine connects itself to the material and unifies the realms of heaven and earth.

### 3. Ecological implications

Despite these liturgical suggestions that the incarnation applies to more than just human beings, it has traditionally been associated only with them. The central concern of the incarnation for most theologians is Christ’s becoming human in order to redeem humans. And indeed the liturgical texts and homilies are

primarily concerned with human redemption. Comments about the rest of creation, as collected here, are certainly not the central affirmations of the texts but tend to express the exuberance of joy superlatively and maybe primarily metaphorically. To what extent, then, can we really speak of ‘cosmic redemption’? Do Christ’s incarnation, life, death, and resurrection have any implications for non-human creatures, the earth, or even the whole cosmos?

### 3.1 Imago Dei and microcosm

The distinction between human and non-human is drawn most firmly through the notion of the *imago Dei*. Although not that prominent in the Scriptures (where it is only mentioned on a couple of occasions<sup>138</sup>), it has become a fundamental definition of the human in much of the Eastern literature, both patristic and contemporary.<sup>139</sup> Usually this idea is employed to separate humans from the rest of creation, to say something special about them that is not true of other creatures. Humans alone are created in God’s image and no other animal shares in this image (certainly plants or other bodies in the universe do not, although there is some discussion whether angels are made in God’s image). This image or special human endowment has been defined in many different ways, such as upright posture, sexual differentiation, tool-making, creativity, rationality, language, freedom, self-determination, meaning-making, storytelling, culture, hope, self-transcendence, personhood, spirituality or by locating it in the human face, soul, spirit, intellect, will, consciousness, or a vital force (Conradie, 2005a:85-86). In the early Patristic literature it is most commonly, though by no means exclusively, identified with logos, i.e. rationality or more generally the ability to perceive meaning and give sense to things. Athanasius says: ‘Among these things, of all things upon earth he had mercy upon the human race, and seeing that by the principle of its own coming into being it would not be able to endure eternally, he granted them a further gift, creating human beings not simply like all the irrational animals upon the earth but making them according to his own image (cf. Gen 1.27), giving them a share in the power of his own Word, so having as it were shadows of the Word and being made rational, they might be able to abide in blessedness, living the true life which is really that of the holy ones in paradise’ (*Inc.*3, 2011:57). John Damascene summarises the consensus of the tradition several centuries later: ‘with His own

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<sup>138</sup> Lossky in his *Image and Likeness* admits that ‘in the purely Hebraic text of the Bible, interpreted in the historic context in which the books of the Old Testament were composed, there is nothing (or almost nothing) which would permit us to base either a theognosis or a religious anthropology on the notion of the image of God’ (1974:129) and goes on to argue (unfortunately in rather supersessionist fashion) for a ‘theology of the image’ and human personhood as a distinctly Christian contribution.

<sup>139</sup> Basically all contemporary introductions to Orthodoxy (Evdokimov, 1959:Part I; Clément, 1961:V.5; Lossky, 2002:114-134; Meyendorff, 1979:138-150; Ware, 1963, 1979; Alfeyev, 2002:chap. 5) devote some space to a discussion of the *imago dei*. Theokritoff provides a summary of the aspects relevant for environmental concerns, including a brief discussion of its traditional connection with the notion of ‘dominion’ or rule over the rest of creation (2009:64-79). Conradie, who summarises thinking on the *imago dei* extensively, makes some helpful distinctions: ‘For the sake of clarity, it is important to note that the classic Christian position, namely that humans only were created in the image of God, entails three crucial affirmations. Firstly, it is usually alleged that humans are unique, that is, that the human species has certain inherent characteristics which none of the other species (also none of the nonhuman mammals) possesses. Secondly, the inalienable dignity of human beings is typically derived from such human uniqueness. Thirdly, it is assumed that the dignity of human beings entitles us to some position of special status and responsibility in God’s

hands He created man after His own image and likeness from the visible and invisible natures. From the earth He formed his body and by His own inbreathing gave him a rational and understanding soul, which last we say is the divine image—for the “according to His image” means the intellect and free will, while the “according to His likeness” means such likeness in virtue as is possible’ (*Orthodox Faith* II.12:235).<sup>140</sup> John’s distinction between image and likeness here is also representative of similar interpretations in thinkers before and after him.<sup>141</sup>

Closely linked to this is the idea of humans as microcosm. In the human being material and spiritual meet in a unique fashion. Humans are placed on the boundary between the two realms and are thus able to mediate between them. Although this idea also goes back to early Greek philosophers and is mentioned by the Cappadocians and other patristic writers,<sup>142</sup> for most Orthodox thinkers it is quintessentially expressed by Maximus the Confessor. After outlining that humans consist of soul and body, Maximus explains: ‘For this reason the human person was introduced last among beings, as a kind of natural bond mediating between the universal poles through their proper parts, and leading into unity in itself those things that are naturally set apart from one another by a great interval’ (Amb.41, Louth:157). He argues that this enables humans to bring together creation by understanding the *logoi* of things and by overcoming the various levels of division:

And then the human person unites what is perceived by the mind and what is perceived by the senses with each other by achieving equality with the angels in its manner of knowing, and thus makes the whole creation one single creation, no longer divided by what it can know and what it cannot know, through its equality to the angels lacking nothing in their knowledge and understanding of the *logoi* in the things that exist, according to which the infinite pouring out of the gift of true wisdom inviolably and without intermediary furnishes, so far as is permitted, to those who are worthy a concept of God beyond understanding or explanation. And finally, beyond all these, the human person unites the created nature with the uncreated through love (O the wonder of God’s love for us human beings!), showing them to be one and the same through the possession of grace, the whole [creation] wholly interpenetrated by God, and become completely whatever God is, save at the level of being, and receiving to itself the whole of God himself, and acquiring as a kind of prize for its ascent to God the most unique God himself, as the end of the movement of everything that moves towards it, and the firm and unmoved rest of everything that is carried towards it, being the undetermined and infinite limit and definition of every definition and law and ordinance, of reason and mind and nature. (Amb.41:158)<sup>143</sup>

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household, a position which applies to none of the other members’ (2005a:80). Hall tries to recover this image for ecological purposes (1986, 1990).

<sup>140</sup> I will be employing John’s work on the orthodox faith (Part III of his *Fount of Knowledge*) repeatedly as a ‘summary’ of the tradition. Both the translator in his introduction to the text as well as Louth’s recent work (2002) on John (although in a different and much fuller fashion) recognise the importance of this work as a consensus of the Eastern tradition. All references for John are to this text unless indicated otherwise.

<sup>141</sup> There is an extensive literature on the *imago dei* both generally and more specifically in the work of particular thinkers. For a summary see Camelot who focuses on the Alexandrian tradition but provides a good general overview (1956:443-471).

<sup>142</sup> In his oration on Theophany (i.e., Nativity) Gregory Nazianzen explains: ‘So he set upon earth a kind of second world, great in its littleness: another kind of angel, a worshipper of mixed origins, a spectator of the visible creation and an initiate into the intelligible, king of the things of earth yet ruled from above, earthly and heavenly, subject to time yet deathless, visible and knowable, standing halfway between greatness and lowliness... He is a living being: cared for in this world, transferred to another, and, as the final stage of the mystery, made divine by his inclination towards God’ (38.11, Daley:122). He goes on to interpret paradise (‘whatever that Paradise was’) in a spiritual fashion where the ‘immortal plants’ are ‘divine thoughts’ [*logoi*]. This is also an idea developed further by Maximus. Leontius in a homily on Pentecost similarly speaks of humans as a microcosm and interprets the *imago dei* in terms of their upright posture (XIII.7, 160), another favourite ancient explanation grounded in Plato.

<sup>143</sup> Maximus elaborates on this idea in his *Mystagogy* where he presents humans (and the church) as both microcosm and macrocosm of the creation. Attributing these ideas to a teacher, he says: ‘And again using a well-known image, he submitted that the whole world, made up of visible and invisible things, is man and conversely that man made up of body

Humans thus have a unique task of understanding which makes them equal to angels. They are able to bring together what has been divided, finally overcoming even the distinction between created and uncreated by becoming fully divine except in essence. John Damascene summarises this succinctly: ‘He made him a sort of miniature world within the larger one, another adoring angel, a compound, an eye-witness of the visible creation, and initiate of the invisible creation, lord of the things of the earth, lorded over from on high, earthly and heavenly, passing and immortal, visible and spiritual, halfway between greatness and lowliness, at once spirit and flesh—spirit by grace and flesh by pride, the first that he might endure and give glory to his Benefactor, and the second that he might suffer and by suffering be reminded and instructed not to glory in his greatness’ (II.12:235). The human is on the boundary of or the mediator between the spiritual and the physical realms. Humans share both in the material or physical and in the mental or spiritual and thus they are both ‘animal’ and ‘divine’ in some sense. This was developed by some patristic thinkers (and much more strongly in recent Orthodox writing) into the idea of human priesthood of creation: humans are the mediators between God and the earth and its creatures. They are meant to bring together all earthly things and offer them to the divine in their person.<sup>144</sup> In much of the tradition it certainly led to the idea that all of creation was made for human use and that humans are lords over the rest of the earth. As John says: ‘God intended to fashion man after His own image and likeness from the visible and invisible creation to be a sort of king and ruler over the whole earth and the things in it’ (II.12:230).

In some Orthodox thinkers this stress on human distinctiveness because of their creation in the image of God goes so far that they describe humans as ‘demi-gods’ or ‘created gods’ which seems to remove them even further from the rest of creation. Bulgakov argues that humans require a special creation that is not part of the processes of evolution:

Man’s humanity (and, in man, the humanisation of the animal world) is attained not as one of the stages of the evolutionary process but as something completely new, a transcensus, and even, in this sense, an ontological catastrophe. The divine light was lit in the zoological life of creation; the divine spirit entered an animal soul. From the universal ‘earth’, which contained the whole fullness of creaturely life, God created a body to encompass a divine principle: the human spirit. Evolution is interrupted, and zoology and physiology are surpassed; man is created. Therefore, in the face of this discontinuity, this appearance of the humanity of man, new and commensurable with nothing else in the creaturely world, one must tell doctrinal evolutionism: ‘Hands off!’ Man is not a product of evolution; evolution could have produced only a manlike animal. Man appeared in

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and soul is a world. He asserted, indeed, that intelligible things display the meaning of the soul as the soul does that of intelligible things and that sensible things display the place of the body as the body does that of sensible things. And, he continued, intelligible things are the soul of sensible things, and sensible things are the body of intelligible things; that as the soul is in the body so is the intelligible in the world of sense, that the sensible is sustained by the intelligible as the body is sustained by the soul; that both make up one world as body and soul make up one man, neither of these elements joined to the other in unity denies or displaces the other according to the law of the one who has bound them together’ (Berthold:196). The special task of humans is to bring the material and the spiritual together. [Unfortunately, for Maximus (as for many other Patristic writers) this implies great superiority of the soul over the body: ‘And let him as best as he can take care of the soul which is immortal, divine, and in process of deification through the virtues, and let him disdain the flesh which is subject to corruption and death and able to soil the soul’s dignity by its carelessness’ (Berthold:197).] For summaries of Maximus’ ideas, which highlight especially the ‘cosmic dimension’ of his thought, see Theokritoff (2009:51-70), Louth in Clayton & Peacocke (2004), in Horrell et al. (2010:211-222) and in his introduction to Maximus (1996:3-77). For a more extensive discussion of Maximus’ anthropology, see Thunberg (1995) and Cooper (2005).

<sup>144</sup> Theokritoff points out that although this idea of human offering of the cosmos is present in some Patristic writers, they do not talk about this as a *priestly* role. This language of human priesthood is more recent (2009:216).

the world suddenly, catastrophically. Between man's animal nature and his humanity lies an ontological *hiatus*, an abyss that cannot be overcome by any evolution. (2008b:175)

He links this again to the idea of the image of God. Humans are endowed with a part of God, so that the human being 'in a certain sense is already divine even according to creation' (115). They are the creaturely *sophia* that images the divine on earth and ultimately reunites with its source (182). Humans hypostatise the 'world soul' (176). He employs the notion of humans as microcosm to argue that all of creation is purely on behalf of the human, indeed 'the universe is man... connecting and containing all. The Six Days are the story of the world as the story of man, the story of the creation of the world for man, for the purpose of man, having man in view' (67, 177). Hence he envisions a hierarchy of being in which 'man is the supreme goal of creation' (77) and a 'created god' (179). Therefore, humans are to 'humanise' and 'perfect' creation and guide it to its fullness (2008b:149-150, also 2004:315). The world cannot have a direct relation to God. Such relation is only possible through human mediation (2008b:199, 201).

Similarly, Alfeyev claims that the idea that humans are endowed with the breath of God implies their original divinity and complete distinction from other created beings: 'The reference to "the breath of life" can be taken to mean the Holy Spirit. Human beings partake of the divine nature by the very act of creation and are *thereby utterly different from other living beings*: humans do not simply assume a higher position in the hierarchy of animals, but are "demi-gods" set over the animal kingdom' (2002:59; emphasis mine). He sees this as further supported by the notion of the *imago dei*: 'The Christian tradition, however, presents an exalted image of the human being. Each one of us is regarded as a person created in the image of God, an icon of the Creator... we are commensurable, almost "identical" to God' (2002:64).<sup>145</sup> Therefore, he contends, we may think of Adam or humans in general as kings over creation. Adam 'understood the language of the animals, and they obeyed him; all the elements were subject to him as if to a king. The Lord made man the prince of this age and master of all things visible... Adam gives a name to every animal and bird, and by doing so he demonstrates his ability to know the meaning, the hidden *logos*, of every living creature' (65-66).<sup>146</sup> And he

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<sup>145</sup> This is also an idea expounded by Sophrony Sakharov. Nicholas Sakharov claims, for example: 'Speaking of the extent of deification, Fr Sophrony uses the term *identity* between God and man: the latter is to inherit the fullness (pleroma) of the divine being to the extent that he becomes equal with God. He points out that deified man becomes "like God in all things"' (2002:148). He even extends this to various attributes usually reserved solely for the divine: Sophrony reads 'into the words of scripture various aspects of man's equality with God. The summary covers the following divine attributes: eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, truth, universal love, without-beginningness, omnipotence, perfection, and life' (150). Vladimir Lossky, on the other hand, sees no automatic connection between humans and God. Although he grounds the notion of personhood in creation in God's image, he thinks of this as an 'analogy' not a 'participation': 'Personhood belongs to every human being by virtue of a singular and unique relation to God who created him "in His image". This personal element in anthropology, discovered by Christian thought, does not indicate, in itself, a relationship of participation, much less a "kinship" with God, but rather an analogy: like the personal God, in whose image he is created, man is not only "nature"' (1974:137). He goes on to suggest that humans thus have capacity for deification or for hell. He does not comment on how human creation as *imago dei* relates to the rest of creation.

<sup>146</sup> This notion is grounded in Chrysostom and other Patristic writers. In his homilies on Genesis, Chrysostom confirms: 'Like their master he [Adam] imposed names on them and to each species he assigned its own name, wild beasts, birds, and all irrational animals according to the intelligence granted him, so that we at this stage might be in a position to know that all those creatures, despite the ministering role they play and the assistance they give human beings in their labours, are nonetheless irrational and in great measure inferior to them—just in case we might think it was about them God said, "Let us make a helpmate for him". You see, although they are helpful and make a very useful contribution to the service

concludes from this, as do many other Orthodox writers, that only humans can voice the praise of creation. Here humans are envisioned as fundamentally distinct from the rest of creation and as practically identical with God. And such distinction for Alfeyev does imply human mastery and ‘kingship’ over creation.

Zizioulas provides a more tempered account. He interprets the idea of the *imago dei* not in terms of mastery but as creativity. He is the only Orthodox writer on this issue to acknowledge explicitly that humans are animals and genetically extremely close to chimpanzees. He also admits rationality in other animals and thus does not interpret this as the distinctive human feature. Instead humans are distinguished from the rest of creation through their drive ‘towards *love* and *creativity*’: ‘Creativity, therefore, and *eros* are the positive exercise of human freedom, as they “image” God’s will and capacity freely to bring about beings other than himself which bear his personal seal, albeit, in the case of human being, not out of nothing but out of a given world’ (2006:40). Unlike the other animals, humans are ‘called’ by God to genuine relationship. He insists: ‘This is the constitutive event of humanity. Outside this event of divine call, humanity is part of the animal species’ (41). According to Zizioulas this is the only way to define human superiority without contradicting science. He recuperates the notion of the microcosm by employing the idea of the human hypostasis which summarises or brings together the entire creation: ‘this means that as images of God human beings are called to offer the rest of creation the possibility of overcoming mortality, that is, showing them to be truly hypostatic by hypostasising their “hypostasis” in a personal relationship with the immortal God so that they may obtain true hypostatic existence’ in the ‘image of the truly hypostatic God’ (67). Throughout his treatment Zizioulas puts a strong emphasis on defining humanity in terms of personhood and relation, although such relation seems to be envisioned primarily among humans not between humans and other creatures.<sup>147</sup>

There certainly is a sense in which the idea of the microcosm actually represents well the evolutionary history of the cosmos. Humans do indeed bear the universe in their bodies in some way, which is precisely what is expressed by the notion that we are ‘stardust’. In that sense humans are indeed a ‘small cosmos’ with an explicit physical link to the whole history of the universe. Yet the same is true of other creatures on the planet and indeed of the planet itself. Most creatures on this earth do carry the evolutionary history of the cosmos in their genes and in the elements of which these are constituted and are thus deeply connected with it and with each other. They do serve as microcosms: small pictures of the cosmos, of its elements and its development.<sup>148</sup> Edwards stresses that humans ‘share a common history of life with all the other creatures of

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of human beings, they are nonetheless irrational’ (15.4, FC:196). The notion of the *logoi* of creation is most fully developed by Maximus. See references provided above and brief discussion below.

<sup>147</sup> This is already a major theme in his earlier work (1985).

<sup>148</sup> Gregory of Nyssa argues something similar in order to dismiss the notion of the microcosm: ‘For they say that the human being is a little cosmos, put together from the same elements as the universe. Those who bestow such praises as this on human nature by a high-sounding name forget that they are dignifying man with the attributes of the gnat and the mouse. For they too are composed of these four elements, because certainly there can be seen in anything animate some share, more or less, in those qualities without which nothing that possesses any of the senses could exist naturally. Why should it then be thought a great thing for the human to have the stamp and likeness of the cosmos—of the heaven that passes away, of the earth that changes, of all things that they are governed by them, which pass away with the turning of what contains them?’ (*The Creation of Man*, 16.1). [This passage was pointed out to me by Andrew Louth. The



Earth' and that our story 'is part of the larger story of the universe itself' (2006:13). And this is true of all creatures. Each complex living being can be regarded as the apex of creation and as summing up the entire history of the cosmos in this sense. It is also not true that all other beings depend solely on us. In fact, Conradie suggests the opposite: 'Few if any ecosystems depend on the presence of humans on the top of the food chain, biologically, we do not play much of a role in the ecosystems in which we live. Moreover, all forms of life are dependent on the a-biotic elements in the biosphere. This suggests that value in an ecosystem cannot be determined merely on the basis of complexity. The health and abundance of plant species are crucial for any ecosystem to flourish' (2005a:117).<sup>149</sup> Humans need other creatures in far more ways than those creatures require humans.

Of course the language of microcosm is not usually employed to interpret humans as a summary of the material cosmos only. Rather, it draws on a worldview that sees much of the cosmos as spiritual and humans are conceived as mediators between the physical and spiritual worlds through their combination of body and soul.<sup>150</sup> They stand on the dividing line between physical and spiritual by virtue of their physical, material bodies and their rational, conscious, free souls. Their superiority and rule over the rest of creation is justified by their *spiritual* nature not by their physical greatness. In contemporary writers this is often expressed in terms of human consciousness and especially in the notion of human priesthood on behalf of creation.

### 3.2 Human priesthood

The most important 'ecological' consequence usually drawn from the idea that humans are created in the image of God and serve as the microcosm of creation is that of human priesthood on behalf of creation. The idea that humans must 'lift up' creation and serve as its 'priests' has become extremely popular and indeed is by many regarded as *the* contribution of Orthodox thought to the environmental debate.<sup>151</sup> Argenti's summary is representative of ideas expressed by many thinkers:

This offering by the faithful is the primary purpose of the Liturgy, and it hearkens back to man's age-old vocation to become the priest of the creation. God entrusted man with stewardship of all the earth, and man is unique in his ability to offer up the creation to his Creator, and to praise God on behalf of fire, hail, snow, mountain, hill,

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translation is his as distributed in class.] Although Nyssa here rejects the notion of humans as microcosm, much of the rest of the text preceding and following this passage seeks to establish human superiority over the rest of creation in other ways.

<sup>149</sup> He concludes from this the right of other species to flourish in a way that retains some meaning even for the concept of humans as in the image of God: 'The health of the ecosystem has priority over the right of any other species to flourish. This implies, for example, that human population growth, together with human consumption, has to be curbed in order to allow other species to flourish too. Each form of life has its own inherent dignity and requires our respect. Such dignity cannot be easily graded amongst the species. Although it may be true that humans (and humans only) are described in the biblical roots of Christianity as the image of God, this does not necessarily imply that other creatures have less dignity or that they are less loved by God. That humans are called to be the image of God suggests, instead, that the dignity attributed to us by God may serve as a model or an analogy for the dignity with which we are called to treat otherkind' (2005a:127).

<sup>150</sup> John Damascene, in his account of creation, actually speaks of 'winged fowl' as bringing together 'water, earth and air' (II.9:226).

<sup>151</sup> Conradie summarises the main interpretations of the special human vocation: 'This may be described in terms of categories such as dominion, stewardship, vocation, labour, discipleship, diakonia, service (Dulles), priesthood, being a created co-Creator (Hefner), etc.' (2005a:88).

fruitful tree and beast (see Psalm 148). Man is the link between God and the world: though he is earth, he has been created in God's image by the breath of God. But it is uniquely by commemorating Christ, the only true Priest and perfect Man, that the faithful offer up the creation to God in the bread and wine, so that He might make it His Kingdom. This is the vocation par excellence of man and, more particularly, of the Christian. To be fully human is to celebrate the eucharistic offering in union with Christ, and we commemorate His Offering of His Body and Blood on the cross together with the entire Church throughout history and throughout the world. (2002:168)

Zizioulas in a chapter concerned specifically with the environmental crisis stresses the human role even more strongly: 'The priest is the one who takes in his hands the world to refer it back to God, and who, in return, brings God's blessing to what he refers to God. Through this act, creation is brought into communion with God himself. This is the essence of priesthood, and it is only the human being who can do it, namely, unite the world in his hands in order to refer it to God, so that it can be united with God and thus saved and fulfilled'. Humans enable the relation between creation and God. They unite the world. He goes on to insist that 'this role of the human being, as the priest of creation, is absolutely necessary for creation itself, because without this reference of creation to God the whole created universe will die... Therefore, the only way to protect the world from its finitude which is inherent in its nature, is to bring it into relation to God... This underlines the significance of man as the priest of creation, who would unite the world and relate it to God so that it may live for ever' (in Walker & Carras, 1996:183; see also 1989:15, 41-45, 1990:1-5, 2003 and in Berry, 2006).

Without human intercession on behalf of creation apparently the universe will not survive.

Alfeyev locates this priestly calling explicitly in the liturgy:

Thus God brings primordial man into existence to be a priest of the entire visible creation. He alone of all living creatures is capable of praising God verbally and blessing him. The entire universe is entrusted to him as a gift, for which he is to bring a 'sacrifice of praise' and which he is to offer back to God as 'thine own of thine own'. In this unceasing eucharistic offering lies the meaning and justification of human existence. The heavens, the earth, the sea, the fields and mountains, the birds and the animals, indeed, the whole of creation, assign to humans this high-priestly ministry in order that God may be praised through their lips. (2002:66)<sup>152</sup>

Ware refers precisely to the same phrase from the liturgy to explain our priesthood of creation which consists in 'our supreme privilege, consciously and gratefully, to offer the created world back to the Creator' (1997:20). Bartholomew also frequently cites this phrase from the liturgy to exemplify what he calls the Orthodox 'eucharistic and liturgical ethos' which can make a major contribution to the environmental debate (2008:98-103; 2011:37; 2012:32-36, 192, 200-202). Despite his strong environmental concerns, he does not seem averse to using dominion language himself. In his conversations with Clément he says: 'Man is called to govern as a king, but also as a priest who receives in order to make an offering. He is also called to be a wise poet whose task is to decipher the revelation of the cosmos, to render fully conscious creation's song of praise... It is only through man, who stands between earth and heaven, that creation can fulfil its hidden sacramentality' (1997:102).<sup>153</sup> This strong emphasis on human superiority over the rest of creation is evident

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<sup>152</sup> This is, in fact, the only mention of any non-human creatures in his entire book on Orthodoxy. Apparently, they play no further role worth mentioning. Argenti (who is in general much more open to ecological concerns) makes a similar point: 'It is only through the mouth of man that creation can hymn its Creator and render Him thanks. ... Man is responsible for the creatures: he is the priest of creation. He is the crown and the conscience of creation. He brought about the fall of creation, but he is able to offer it up to God with a view to its re-creation' (2006:252).

<sup>153</sup> He also mentions the notion of the microcosm and the logoi of creation in this context (here relying on Gregory of Nyssa, although he also frequently mentions Maximus).

in most Orthodox theology and is consistently embraced by writers with clear ecological commitments as a significant contribution to the environmental debate (including Khalil, Gregorios, George, Harakas, Nikolaou, Ware, Chrysavgis).

From this idea of priesthood it is concluded that humans have a special task to 'lift up' and transform the physical creation. Ware expresses this in terms of mediation, unification, and revelation: 'As "an animal that is being deified", then, our human vocation is self-transcendence and unification. We are called by God's grace to reach out beyond space into infinity, beyond time into eternity. It is our task to mediate between the created world and the Uncreated. As icons of God, we have the capacity to unite earth and heaven... Uniting earth and heaven, making earth heavenly and heaven earthly, we reveal the spirit-bearing potentialities of all material things, and we disclose and render manifest the divine presence at the heart of creation' (1997:18). Yannaras expresses it in similar fashion (1996:98-100). While the most recent writers link this explicitly to care for the environment and try to avoid connotations of human manipulation of creation, such ideas were not always excluded. Several earlier writers quite happily used this notion to justify unqualified economic progress and technological 'improvements' of creation that have turned out to be highly destructive of nature.<sup>154</sup> Indeed, it seems that the idea of human transfiguration of the cosmos can be interpreted in most anyway one wishes and there is no guarantee that such improvement will turn out to be benign. Conradie criticises this notion of human priesthood as heavily anthropocentric, 'since it seems to encourage the remaking and hominisation of the whole biosphere in the human image and for the needs of humans'. He contends that 'this is typically based on claims for human uniqueness: since humans alone are conscious of God, humans have to mediate between insentient creatures and God' and critiques it as follows: 'This view misses the point that God is as conscious of the non-human creation as humankind, and that God therefore does not depend on human mediation. The view that humans serve as mediators between creation and Creator, based on the imitation of Christ, does not recognise the unique role of Christ as mediator between the fallen humanity and a holy God. An ecological anthropology cannot be built directly upon Christology' (2005a:210). This problematic is particularly evident in Bulgakov's strong emphasis on our task to 'humanise' the whole cosmos, since we are the only ones who can 'hypostasise' the creaturely sophia.

Many Orthodox acknowledge that this notion of humans as microcosm and priests of creation is anthropocentric, but do not see that as a problem. Guroian, for example, admits 'as for the complaint that the Judeo-Christian tradition is anthropocentric, I will concede the point: Scripture and tradition alike do support the claim that God honours humankind uniquely among all his creatures' but contends that 'inasmuch as these

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<sup>154</sup> See for example the chapter on 'Orthodoxy and Economy' in Bulgakov's introduction to orthodoxy, where he extends the blessing of 'natural elements' to be extended to 'economic toil' due to human 'transfiguring power' (1935:193). He goes on to set forth a view of economic progress which is basically a subjection and exploitation of nature (196-197) and even speaks of the processes of consumption as a 'humanisation of nature' (197). Of course this was written before all the detrimental effects of these activities were clearly visible. Similarly, Staniloae claims that God enjoys it when we turn creation into a product, since in this way man can participate in 'progress of creation' (1969:670) by promoting work and civilisation. Ware in an early article also endorsed technology as an example of human priestly transfiguration of nature (even as a confirmation of the *imago dei*), although he has been much more guarded in his more recent articles (1971). Theocritoff is critical of Staniloae's unqualified endorsement of economic and technological progress (in Cunningham & Theocritoff, 2008:71).

special honours entail concomitant responsibilities associated with our priestly vocation to care for his creation, I do not believe that this anthropocentrism can rightly be characterised as a flaw or a liability. The problem lies not in the anthropocentrism as such but in our failure to live up to our obligations as specially entrusted creatures of God' (1994:166). Theokritoff in an early article similarly defended Orthodox anthropocentrism (1994), although she distances herself from some of that language in her recent book.<sup>155</sup> In his introduction to the most recent volume of Bartholomew's addresses and writings on ecology, Chrysavgis strongly defends anthropocentrism, although he rejects what he calls 'anthropomorphism' (2012:19).

These endorsements of anthropocentrism are exacerbated by the fact that most ancient thinkers (though not only Orthodox ones) think of most non-human creation as made exclusively for human use.<sup>156</sup> Chrysostom affirms this repeatedly in his homilies on Genesis.<sup>157</sup> Basil and Gregory Nazianzen are similarly convinced of it and indeed find themselves obligated at times (as does Chrysostom) to justify how certain wild beasts or poisonous plants could possibly be said to be 'useful' for human beings.<sup>158</sup> John Damascene again serves as a good summary: 'Then at the Creator's command there came forth every sort of animal: creeping things, and wild beasts, and cattle. Everything was for the suitable use of man'. He explains the various 'uses' of the creatures and concludes: 'For there is no animal or plant in which the Creator has not put some virtue that is of use for the needs of man. He knew all things before they were made and He saw that man in his freedom would fall and be given over to corruption; yet for man's suitable use He made all the things that are in the sky and on the earth and in the water' (II.10:228; see also II.30:264). Several thinkers conclude (like Alfeyev above who presumably draws on them for this) that the idea of the image of God is essentially about human power and control over the rest of creation (including at times male power over women).<sup>159</sup> Bulgakov insists that 'Man is the chief of creation; he accepts it with love, but also with the feeling of his own

<sup>155</sup> After her summary of Maximus, she says that 'some Orthodox theologians will actually describe the Orthodox view of creation as "anthropocentric"' thus presumably implying that she does not think this entirely adequate (2009:67).

<sup>156</sup> For example, Cyril of Jerusalem says: 'In six days God made the world: but the world was for man. The sun however resplendent with bright beams, yet was made to give light to man and all the living creatures were formed to serve us: herbs and trees were created for our enjoyment. All the works of creation were God, but none of these was an image of God, save man only' (XII.5). This is a fairly common assumption in Patristic literature, thus similar examples could be multiplied. Often this assumption is grounded in the verse which gives humans dominion over the earth. Conradie points out that 'for centuries, this command was understood to mean that human beings are the dominant species on earth. The natural world was created for our benefit. After all, we are the "crown of creation". We are created in the "image of God". We are called to control the forces of nature. We may use and "develop" any available resources for our benefit. This is epitomised by the dream of technological mastery and control' (2005a:203).

<sup>157</sup> 'I mean, the human being is the creature more important than all the other visible beings, and for this creature all the others have been produced—sky, earth, sea, sun, moon, stars, the reptiles, the cattle, all the brute beasts' (8.4, 107).

<sup>158</sup> Chrysostom says: 'You see, it was not simply for our use that everything was created by him, but on account of his great prodigality: while some things were created for our use, other had this purpose—that the power of their Creator might be proclaimed. So, when you hear that "God saw that it was good", presume no longer to contradict Sacred Scripture, nor bury your head in idle speculation with questions why this or that was made. "God blessed them", the text says, "and said, "Increase and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth."' This is the blessing, that they should grow to a great number. You see, since the creatures he made had life in them, he wanted their life to be lasting' (7.12, 98).

<sup>159</sup> Chrysostom asserts that "'image" refers to the matter of control, not anything else, in other words, God created the human being as having control of everything on earth, and nothing on earth is greater than the human being, under whose authority everything falls' (8.9, 110) and he is quite happy to extend such control over women as well. John Damascene instead claims that human control over creation was complete before the fall and is now hampered due to it (II.10:228-229).

independence, proper to a being conscious of his spirituality. Man is superior to nature, but he is at the same time a natural being. This is the fact which establishes a positive relation between man and nature, that garden of God which man is called to cultivate and where he should command' (2002:192). Staniloae claims that nature functions 'only as a framework, at once predictable and flexible, for the free working of the human person' (2000:60); 'only humans can be and become more and more the "witness" of the glory and goodness of God' and become God's partners (18). This easily leads to a justification of exploitation and abuse of nature. It is not clear that the idea of humans as priests necessarily prevents such applications. And even when it does not lead directly to dominion language, it is still rather unclear what it would mean for humans to 'humanise' other aspects of creation, as Bulgakov (and many others with him) insists. How would one 'humanise' an earthworm, a fungus, or another galaxy?

Despite the fact that this has become the favourite Orthodox way of expressing human responsibility for the non-human creation, it is deeply problematic. On the one hand, this notion separates humans in a fundamental way from the rest of creation. Only humans have a certain capacity for rationality, morality, even divinity, which no other animal has. As many recent studies in animal ethology have shown, such stark divisions between humans and other animals cannot be sustained (Bekoff, 2002, 2004).<sup>160</sup> Many non-human animals display aspects of rationality, morality, creativity, and any other human attribute one might want to isolate. They do not do so to the same degree, but neither do all humans display these attributes to the same degree and in fact some animals have far more of them than some humans do. The difference between humans and other animals is a difference of degree, not of kind. Nor are humans the pinnacle and end of creation. Although they are indeed the present end of one evolutionary path and thus maybe in some sense its current 'crown', so are most other creatures on this earth, including many plants. Each one is the 'crown' and currently 'highest achievement' of its particular evolutionary path.<sup>161</sup> As shown above, while humans in some sense do bear the history of the whole cosmos in their genes, so do all other complex animals and plants. As Edwards argues:

The anthropic principle points to the close relationship between the age and size of the universe and human emergence. The universe needs to have been expanding for something like fourteen billion years if galaxies are to form, stars are to ignite, elements like carbon are to be synthesised, a solar system incorporating these elements is to be formed around the sun, and human life is to evolve on Earth. Frogs and eagles depend on this fine-tuning of the universe just as much as human beings do. We are all interconnected in the one story of the universe, and we are all made from stardust. (2006:12)

Being made of stardust is not a special human characteristic.

On the other hand, our knowledge of the spatial and temporal extent of the universe renders the idea that humans are necessary in order for the rest of the universe to connect to God rather questionable. Surely,

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<sup>160</sup> Most of this literature is reviewed in great detail by the animal rights literature (Pinches & McDaniel, 1993; Adams, 1994; Birch & Vischer, 1997; Linzey, 1994, 1999, 2007, 2009; Wennberg, 2003; Deane-Drummond & Clough, 2009). In her most recent work Deane-Drummond discusses the larger theological question of the implications of evolution and ethology for the incarnation (2009:162-169) and draws on the theologies of von Balthasar and Bulgakov for a new Christology.

<sup>161</sup> Yet the language of 'crown' and 'height' does suggest a kind of superiority that is not helpful. Having a more complex evolutionary path does not imply a 'higher' position (ontologically or morally). Conradie says: 'In a system

God did not have to ‘wait’ for 13.5 billion years until there was someone finally around capable of praise.<sup>162</sup> Surely God loved the universe and its creatures and rejoiced in them, before there were any humans—maybe more so without their destructive impact. Surely the stars and planets and early one-celled organisms and dinosaurs praised God in their own way without needing humans to supply this praise or to ‘bear them up’ in some fashion.<sup>163</sup> This is not to denigrate the idea of a eucharistic blessing which humans might bestow on earthly elements or the idea that they might bring earthly products and even animals to God for blessing. Surely humans can and should take an active place in the chorus of divine praise. But they occupy one place in the choir; they are not its only cantors. As Page says:

What is missing here is the expression of any belief that God is conscious of, indeed relates to, non-human creation as much as human, and therefore does not *depend* on human mediation. It is often implied that God recognises only human speech, and not that of cheetahs, whales or bats, for instance. That is to project severe limitations on God, and is part of the hyper-inflation of personal metaphors for God. Further, human beings may represent to God what *human beings* think is going on, but what, on this picture, represents the various views of non-human nature on what is going on? All that is to say that our capacity actually rather than intentionally to represent all of creation is limited, and if God had no direct contact with the natural world divine knowledge would be severely reduced. (1996:162)

To require human mediation of divine relationship with the rest of creation seems to limit not only other creatures but also God. Surely God is able to interact with all creatures directly and without mediation?

Yet such a recognition that God relates directly to creation without human intercession is not to dismiss any role for humans. To erase any sort of distinctions between humans and other creatures harbours its own difficulties. To dismiss human distinctiveness entirely and to pretend that all creatures are alike implies both a disregard for the differences that do exist among species and the faulty assumption that we can divest ourselves of our own perspective and possibly even see the world from the standpoint of other creatures. While we certainly should make every attempt to understand, appreciate and sympathise with other creatures, we cannot crawl into their skin or scales, but are bound by our own perspective. While we should become as aware as possible of our own human prejudices, it is impossible and maybe undesirable to attempt to disown our particular perspective entirely. We are rooted in our specific context and cannot become disembodied souls not bound to our own flesh. Merging with the rest of creation in this fashion ends up becoming Gnostic in the sense that it denies the reality, particularity and importance of the flesh. The

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characterised by interdependence among different levels of complexity, no part is intrinsically “higher” or “lower” than any other’ (2005a:117).

<sup>162</sup> This raises interesting issues about temporality. Presumably God does not experience the evolution of the universe in a simple linear fashion. Yet that does not suggest that somehow humans must ‘lift up’ the dinosaurs in order for God to enjoy their praise. And while the issue of temporality may well be irrelevant to God, certainly it is not irrelevant to all the creatures that lived and died on the earth before the arrival of humans on the planet. Do they sustain a relationship with the divine before there are any humans present to articulate and offer their praise?

<sup>163</sup> Moltmann is quite clear that the heavens declare God’s glory without our assistance (1985:31), although he actually does not reject the idea of humans as microcosm (190). Instead of the human being, he speaks of the sabbath as the ‘crown’ of creation. Therefore ‘the enduring meaning of human existence lies in its *participation* in this joyful paean of God’s creation. This song of praise was sung *before* the appearance of human beings, is sung *outside* the sphere of human beings, and will be sung *after* human beings have—perhaps—disappeared from the planet. To put it without the images of biblical language: the human being is not the meaning and purpose of the world. The human being is not the meaning and purpose of evolution. The cosmogenesis is not bound to human beings. The very reverse is true: the destiny of human beings is bound to the cosmogenesis. Theologically speaking, the meaning and purpose of human beings is to be found in God himself, like the meaning and purpose of all things’ (197; emphases his).

distinctiveness of human flesh matters just as the distinctiveness of all other animal flesh does (as well as the particularity of plants and even of inanimate matter). Yet this distinctiveness matters not as inherent superiority, but as particularity among other equally valuable distinct and particular beings. All these differences matter to and are valued by God. Thus, while humans are distinctive in some sense as humans, so are other creatures in their own particular and multiple ways of being distinctive, while also relating to other creatures.<sup>164</sup> We must begin to speak about human distinctiveness *among* rather than *from* other creatures.<sup>165</sup>

Furthermore, the complete rejection of human distinctiveness can also imply an abdication of responsibility. Certainly we do have tremendous power over other creatures on this planet and have used that power for ill, both intentionally and unintentionally. Conradie points out that ‘the role of humans in an ecosystem cannot be underestimated, precisely because human power is potentially highly destructive’ (2005a:117). While we may not be capable of reversing the destructive effects of our actions even if we were to focus all our energies on doing so, we cannot simply walk away and leave the mess. As Conradie observes: ‘We have become, whether we like it or not, the custodians of the ecosystems in which we live. We no longer have a choice: we are responsible. The centrality of the human species is therefore a function of human power and the devastating impact of human culture’ (2005a:128).<sup>166</sup> Most of the time it is the best ecological policy to let things be, not to meddle with functioning ecosystems, not to interfere with nature, to live as lightly on the planet as possible. But very few if any such pristine places remain. In most places we have already interfered and wreaked all kinds of havoc. These problems must be alleviated as much as possible and this requires very careful study and sensitive attempts at help instead of quick fixes. Rivers can be cleaned up (though they never return to a pristine state), forests can be replanted (though not as ‘old-growth’), some animals can be repopulated in areas where they have been eliminated, waste can be and surely should be removed. In all these ways notions of priesthood (and indeed of stewardship) may actually be helpful for calling people to responsibility and leading them to action. What we must prevent is the assumption that we are better than other animals, that we are the only creatures of interest to God, and that we have the ability to meddle with creation in a way that ‘improves’ it.

At the same time it is extremely important to continue to stress that non-human creatures do not somehow ‘require’ human articulation of their praise but are loved by God directly. Some contemporary Orthodox writers do indeed acknowledge that various aspects of creation might respond to God without human intercession. Bloom says, for example, ‘It goes without saying that each part of creation relates to God in an individual way, but there is no part of creation which has no relationship to God. Otherwise our understanding of the miraculous would be impossible. When Christ orders the waves to be still, and the wind

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<sup>164</sup> Some ecological writers suggest that we should extend the idea of the *imago dei* to other creatures. See below.

<sup>165</sup> Conradie also argues this (2005a:99). He rightly points out that ‘we have to acknowledge that humans are different from rocks, spiders, lizards, octopuses and zebras in ways which are important at least to us. What is required is an ecologically sensitive appreciation of differences. If we treat other species as if they are alike or as if they are human, that would constitute another form of anthropocentrism’ (101).

<sup>166</sup> Similarly, McDaniel insists that ‘even if we live up to the call of a just and sustainable future, we are doomed to dominion’ and must find ways of ‘coming to grips with our dominion and learning to use it wisely and compassionately, in a Christlike manner’ (1995:121).

to cease to blow, it does not mean that He has some sort of magic power over nature, but that the living word of God is apprehended in some way by all of His creation' (2005:126). He acknowledges that the story of creation shows human beings connected to all other creatures, instead of being placed in a much higher and separate position.<sup>167</sup> Christ's incarnation implies that everything created is linked to Christ:

In this sense one can say... that Christ's incarnation is a cosmic event, that is, that this phenomenon links Him with the whole cosmos, with all that is created; because at that moment when energy or being arises it recognises itself in Christ and its unity with Divinity. And when we think of matter and of that earth on which we live, of the world which surrounds us, of the universe of which we are a tiny fragment, we have to imagine and to understand that by our fleshliness we are related to all that which is material in the universe. And that Christ, being Man in the full and absolute sense of that word, is linked by his fleshliness to all creation: the smallest atom or the largest galaxy recognises itself in Him and in His glory.

He concludes that 'we think and speak of the Incarnation too often as something which happened only for Man, for mankind' (2005:130).<sup>168</sup> Is it possible to push further this insight that the incarnation affects all of creation and is not only for humans?

### 3.3 Inclusive incarnation

Indeed the liturgical texts seem to permit us to depict the incarnation in a more inclusive fashion than we have traditionally done. The liturgy frequently speaks not only of Christ's becoming 'human' but also of Christ as the Creator becoming 'creature', as the immaterial having become 'material', as the unlimited and uncircumscribed becoming limited and circumscribed. None of these terms are specific to human creatures or human materiality. Humans are members of the created, limited, circumscribed, and material realm that encompasses all of creation. We are increasingly recognising that this is true also on biological, genetic, molecular, and evolutionary levels. If Christ is truly human, then he must share in the same molecular and genetic flesh that shares the history of the whole universe. This incarnate flesh (σάρξ) is that shared by all creatures, not one separate from animality and materiality. Of course, this does not constitute a denial that Christ becomes human. It is an affirmation, rather, that he becomes a human *animal* whose body is also 'made of stardust' and thus shares in the evolutionary history of the universe. Christ's complete identification with this world, including taking on its evolutionary history in his very body, might then enable us also to identify

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<sup>167</sup> 'We are told that when all creatures have been created, God takes up some wet earth and makes Man out of this mud. I do not want to say that this is a literal description of what happened, but that by this we are shown that Man is made from the same basic material as the whole of creation. It follows that from the same substance other creatures are also created, but it is here underlined that Man is not different from other creatures, that he is, as it were, at the root of the existence of all creation, that he is created from the same elementary, basic material from which all the rest of creation has come. That somehow makes us kin, not only—as a non-believer would say—"the highest form of the animal kingdom", but kin to the lowest forms of life on earth. We are formed from the same material' (2005:128). He does go on, however, to link this to Maximus' notion of human responsibility of containing the cosmos within itself and bringing it to God.

<sup>168</sup> Yet, he sees even this larger emphasis grounded in the notion of humans as microcosm: 'And man—or, as the Fathers say, the heart of man—is a microcosm, the universe, the whole creation in a nutshell. So the Incarnation is the beginning of the new creation, the renewal of the whole creation. The new creation was first made manifest in all its dazzling glory through Christ's Resurrection; and ever since then, the Kingdom of God has been among us, in our very midst, and it all began with the incarnation. It was never just a matter of the salvation of persons; the whole world is being saved as well' (2005:199). The incarnation connects human flesh with all other flesh: 'And this flesh which is taken from the earth makes Him kin with us and with the whole of the created world. He is linked by His flesh to everything that has substance' (129).



more fully with the earth and its creatures in the kind of kenotic compassion that is so characteristic of Christ's ministry. As the liturgies envision all of creation to celebrate and profit from the incarnation, maybe we can begin to think of ourselves more fully as part of this community of creatures and to speak of the incarnation more consistently as benefiting the entire cosmos and not just us.

The incarnation has indeed often been read as a way of valuing *human* flesh or bodies. And occasionally (especially in response to Gnostic heresies) it was even understood to affirm materiality in general. At certain points in the tradition the material dimension of the incarnation was stressed more strongly than at others. Probably its most thorough defence occurs in the controversies surrounding iconoclasm and finds its most important exponent in John Damascene. John interprets the incarnation as an affirmation of matter which therefore allows the material representation of Christ on wood and stone. He says in his first treatise:

I do not venerate matter, I venerate the fashioner of matter, *who became matter for my sake* and accepted to dwell in matter and through matter worked my salvation, and *I will not cease from reverencing matter*, through which my salvation was worked. I do not reverence it as God—far from it; how can that which has come to be from nothing be God?—if the body of God has become God unchangeably through the hypostatic union, what gives anointing remains, and what was by nature flesh animated with a rational and intellectual soul is formed, it is not uncreated. *Therefore I reverence the rest of matter and hold in respect that through which my salvation came, because it is filled with divine energy and grace.* (I.16, Louth:29-30; emphases mine)

He goes on to show that various other materials are venerated, such as the cross, the holy tomb, the Gospel books, various other liturgical items and of course the Eucharistic elements and concludes: 'Either do away with reverence and veneration of all these or submit to the tradition of the Church and allow the veneration of images of God and friends of God, sanctified by name and therefore overshadowed by the grace of the divine Spirit. *Do not abuse matter; for it is not dishonourable*; this is the view of the Manichees' (I.16, Louth:30; emphasis mine). Although John is primarily concerned with human salvation here, he clearly affirms that God becomes matter, not merely human, and that all of matter is 'filled with divine energy and grace'. Matter must be revered and respected, not abused. God 'becomes matter' in the incarnation. The incarnation embraces all of matter, not merely the human. Matter is affirmed capable of representing the divine and of being imbued with grace. The incarnation for John constitutes an affirmation of materiality and corporeality, including even inanimate matter.<sup>169</sup> He makes similar statements in his second treatise, rejecting 'abuse of matter' as Manichean and affirming that salvation is worked through matter and therefore matter ought to be revered and even venerated because it contains 'divine energy and grace' (II.13, Louth:69-71). Christ becomes incarnate as matter and this enables us to venerate and affirm matter.<sup>170</sup>

Furthermore, while the tradition has always affirmed human creation in the image of God and even assigned a certain special place to humans, it consistently places humans on the side of the created order and

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<sup>169</sup> Redemption (or deification for that matter), then, cannot be envisioned as a rejection of the material and corporeality. See chapter four.

<sup>170</sup> Edwards affirms that 'in the incarnation... the Word of God is forever bodily, forever matter... every creature is sacramental, revealing and embodying something of the mystery and diversity of the Creator' (1992:67; see also 1995:84-85).

not on that of the divine.<sup>171</sup> The strong distinction between humans and the rest of creation that is often implied in the contemporary application of this image of the microcosm is not faithful to the fundamental Patristic distinction between the Creator and the creatures. Especially in response to Arianism but also in other contexts, the most basic distinction is that between the created and the uncreated. And humans are firmly on the side of the created. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, in a homily on Pascha, after having affirmed humans as created immortal and ‘kings of creation’ goes on to outline in great detail how humans are made from the ground and dust and points out that many animals are in fact superior to humans in vigour, speed, sense of orientation, sight, and other capabilities (in Hamman, 1965:104-105).<sup>172</sup> In no way can they be said to be uncreated or to share some sort of the divine essence in an a priori fashion. Human beings are creatures, made from the dust of the earth. Cbasilas, much later, also speaks of us as dust and the ‘basest’ of creatures (1974:52).

The consensus of the tradition is expressed by John Damascene who consistently emphasises God’s superiority over all of creation and our utter inability to know God’s essence (I.4:172; I.8:183; I.11:191; I.12:194). The fundamental distinction for him, as for much of the tradition, is between uncreated and created (II.3:208; IV.7:341). ‘All things are far from God: not in place, but in nature’ (I.13:199). He stresses such difference also in his treatment of the angels who are not ‘unbounded’ or ‘passionless’ because such things can be affirmed only of the divine (II.3:206, 208). He concludes that ‘it is impossible to find in creation any image which exactly portrays the manner of the Holy Trinity in Itself. For that which is created is also compounded, variable, changeable, circumscribed, having shape, and corruptible; so, how shall it show with any clarity the supersubstantial divine essence which is far removed from all such?’ (I.8:183). Nothing can image God perfectly, not even humans. At the same time he affirms that everything in creation in some way participates in God, while still insisting on God’s superiority:

All things He has made participate in His goodness by the fact that they have being. For He is being to them all, since “in him are all things”, not only because He has brought them from nothing into being, but because it is by His operation that all things He made are kept in existence and held together. Living things, however, participate more abundantly, because they participate in the good both by their being and by their living. But rational beings, while they participate in the good in the aforementioned ways, do so still more by their very rationality. For they are in a way more akin to Him, even though He is, of course, immeasurably superior. (IV. 13:354)

Thus although John sees ‘degrees of being’, God remains ‘immeasurably superior’. In his study of John, Louth points out that ‘in fact, it is improper to think of reality as divided into uncreated and created reality, for there is no common reality to be thus divided. Uncreated reality is utterly unlike created reality. We use the terms, hypostasis, ousia, etc. of both God and created being, but the reality they map on to is quite different... the distinction between *theologia* and *oikonomia* is reasserted; the application of Chalcedonian logic to both is not allowed to encroach on the ultimate ineffability and incomprehensibility of the divine’ (2002:114).<sup>173</sup>

<sup>171</sup> Louth sees this articulated in the notion of *creatio ex nihilo* that is central to the Patristic thinkers (2007a:73-94).

<sup>172</sup> Theokritoff uses this text to conclude that for Nyssa ‘in comparison with the exalted nature of God, all created things are inferior to the same degree’ (in Cunningham & Theokritoff, 2008:65). Gregorios also stresses this in his analysis of *diastema* in Gregory (1988:82-99).

<sup>173</sup> Similarly Gregory Palamas insists that ‘every nature is utterly remote and absolutely estranged from the divine nature. For if God is nature, other things are not nature, but if each of the other things is nature, he is not nature: just as he is not

Lossky also laments the dualism which ‘places God and the immortal soul on one side and the flesh and the world in which we live on the other’ and insists that ‘there is another separation which counts above all: that which opposes uncreated Being, which is God, and created being, which is the world called forth from nothingness with all the spiritual and corporeal entities that make it up... [God] is at the same time equally far from and equally close to the intelligences as the senses’ (1974:63). Creation *includes* the human. All creatures face God together in their common creatureliness.

In fact, the tradition actually does not have a clear consensus about the image nor is it entirely agreed that humans still have this image. Some writers suggest that it was lost in the fall. Athanasius expresses himself rather ambivalently: ‘once the transgression had taken off, human beings were now held fast in natural corruption and were deprived of the grace of being in the image’ (*Inc.*7, 2011:65). Many (though not all) make a distinction between image and likeness to affirm what was retained even after the fall and what we must work to reacquire (or in fact acquire for the first time, since it is not clear that Adam actually managed to do this) through moral effort. Yet, when the ‘likeness’ is read in this way its focus is almost entirely on ascetic moral effort (which will be discussed in the next chapter) and says very little about human ‘dominion’ over other creatures. Even if the image is retained, as seems the more common interpretation, the fall is often seen as having made us in some way ‘unnatural’ or even less than human. Christ is the true human being who can restore us to being fully ourselves. Thus most early writers agree with Paul that *Christ* is the true image of God.<sup>174</sup> Athanasius describes Christ’s recreation of the image of God in us by stressing this: ‘But how could this have occurred except by the coming of the very image of God, our Saviour Jesus Christ? ... So the Word of God came himself, in order that he being the image of the Father (cf. Col 1.15), the human being “in the image” might be recreated’ (*Inc.*13, 2011:79). Later he says that only ‘the Image of the Father’ could have re-created such a likeness in human beings (*Inc.*20, 2011:93). John Damascene also points to Christ as the true image of God and of our image as derivative of his through the Spirit (I.13:200). Indeed, he implies that we have become unnatural and thus Christ must restore what is ‘natural’: ‘But the Lord brought us back from what is against nature to what is according to it—for this last is what is meant by ‘according to his image and likeness’’ (III.14:303). At a later point he suggests that ‘we obscured and cancelled out the characteristics of the divine image, we were given over to evil and stripped of the divine communion’ (IV.4:337-338). The many different interpretations of what the image means also suggest that it is difficult to locate exactly in present human nature. It hence might make much more sense to apply the notion of the image primarily to Christ and to suspend speculation on what particular aspects of the human reflect the divine. We should look not to humans in general for insight about the image, but should focus on Christ who is the true image of the

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a being, if others are beings; and if he is a being, the others are not beings. If you accept his as true also for wisdom and goodness and generally all the things around God or said about God, then your theology will be correct and in accord with the saints’ (*Chapters* 78, 173). Palamas goes on to insist on this distinction (173-175).

<sup>174</sup> Camelot contends that this is always the primary meaning of the image of God (1956:445-451). Col. 1:18 is the ‘principal biblical “locus” for a theology of the image’ for the Fathers (451).

divine.<sup>175</sup> Is it really necessary to insist on human distinction from the rest of creation unless one wants to ground their inherent superiority?<sup>176</sup>

It is interesting in this regard that Maximus speaks of the goal of the cosmic liturgy enacted by the human microcosm as an *overcoming of divisions*: between male and female, between inhabited and uninhabited, between earth and heaven, between sensible and intelligible, and ultimately between created and uncreated (Amb.41). And although he first depicts human deification as a way of overcoming these divisions, he goes on to see this most fully and most fundamentally accomplished through Christ. He describes in detail how Christ through the incarnation overcame these various divisions and brought together what had been separate. Christ then brings together not only divine and human, but indeed ‘encompasses the whole creation through its intermediaries and the extremities through their own parts. He binds about himself each with the other, tightly and indissolubly, paradise and the inhabited world, heaven and earth, things sensible and things intelligible, since he possesses like us sense and soul and mind, by which, as parts, he assimilates himself by each of the extremities to what is universally akin to each in the previously mentioned manner. Thus he divinely recapitulates the universe in himself’ (Amb.41, Louth:160). Even his famous account of the *logoi* of creation implies an affinity between the divine Logos, Christ, and the *logoi* or rationality of the cosmos. God is ‘hidden’ in creation and can be perceived through sensible things. God is active in all things and ultimately all things will be in God (Amb.7.1, Blowers:53). Indeed the Logos and the *logoi* are one: ‘the many *logoi* are the one Logos to whom all things are related and who exists in himself without confusion, the essential and individually distinctive God, the Logos of God the Father. He is the beginning and cause of all things... he held together in himself the *logoi* before they came to be... This same Logos, whose goodness is revealed and multiplied in all the things that have their origin in him, with the degree of beauty appropriate to each being,

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<sup>175</sup> Popovitch is quite emphatic about this. The notion of Christ’s ‘God-manhood’ is central to his thinking: ‘Outside of Him a man turns into an apparition, into a scarecrow, into nonsense. Instead of a man, you find the dregs of a man, the fragments of a man, the scraps of a man. Therefore, true manhood lies only in God-manhood; and no other manhood exists under heaven’ (2009:13). And although he usually focuses on the implications of this for human beings, occasionally he goes further: ‘The God-man is the axis of all worlds, from the world of the atom to the world of the cherubim... Anything created that breaks off from Him inevitably plunges into chaos and grief’ (15). See also his fuller explication of this in his systematic theology (e.g. 1993 [christology]; 1995 [soteriology]; 1997a:3-178, especially 82-95).

<sup>176</sup> Instead some writers try to extend the notion of the image to the rest of creation. Edwards, for example, tries to do so while holding on to some specificity for humans and even employing the notion of human priesthood of creation: ‘A mountain range, a brilliant parrot, a great soaring tree, a delicate wild flower bending in the wind—these too are images of God. They are the self-expression of God, sacraments of divine presence in the world. They image God in their own specificity. But the precise specificity of the human is the personal and the relational, and this involves the human in the vocation to relate to other creatures as God does. While all creatures are held in the creative love of God at every moment, human beings are embraced by this love in an interpersonal way. They are creation come to personhood, and as persons they can thank and praise God on behalf of the rest of creation. In this sense, Orthodox theologians rightly speak of human beings as called to be “priests of creation”. They “lift up” creation to God. As part of the community of creation, human beings are to celebrate God’s creation and to praise God on behalf of creation. Their vocation is to love this Earth as God loves it and to delight in the diverse creatures of our planet as God delights in them. To be made in the image of God involves loving and respecting the integrity of each creature with Godlike love and respect’ (2006:17). David Cunningham similarly argues that ‘the *imago Dei* can also describe other elements of the created order’ but suggests that it would be better to limit the notion of image to Christ and use ‘flesh’ for an inclusive account of all living creatures (in Deane-Drummond and Clough, 2009:114). Deane-Drummond argues that Moltmann hopes ‘that the whole earth will take up the divine image and become the *imago Dei*’ and suggests that this is an Orthodox idea (2008:171).

recapitulates all things in himself... For all things, in that they came to be from God, participate proportionally in God' (Amb.7.2, Blowers:54-55). Throughout his account of creation according to the *logoi* they are consistently linked with their origin and final end in the *Logos*, Christ.<sup>177</sup>

It might, then, be more consistent with these aspects of the tradition to speak of Christ as the microcosm of creation instead of interpreting all humans in that way. Indeed, Athanasius, in an attempt to refute 'Gentile' opposition to the incarnation, wonders why Christ did not assume the shape of 'more noble parts of creation' such as 'sun or moon or stars or fire or air, but merely a human being'. He responds that on the one hand Christ did not come 'to be put on display' and thus implies that such an incarnation in other creatures would have been perfectly possible. On the other hand, Christ came 'to heal and to teach those who were suffering' because only humans had sinned: 'Now nothing in creation had gone astray in its notions of God, save the human being only, Why, neither sun nor moon nor heaven nor stars nor water nor air altered their course; but knowing their Creator and King, the Word, they remained as they were made'. He goes on to argue that Christ's assumption of the human body is like 'a part of the whole': since humans were not able to recognise him in creation he helped them by assuming a part of creation (*Inc.*43, 2011:143-45). John Damascene in his careful delineation of the two natures in Christ does not speak primarily of 'divine' and 'human' but employs much broader terms: 'Thus, that which was created remained created, and that which was uncreated, uncreated; the mortal remained mortal and the immortal immortal; the circumscribed remained circumscribed and the uncircumscribed, uncircumscribed; the visible remained visible and the invisible, invisible' (III.3:274; also III.4:276; III.8:286). Indeed John stresses the fleshliness and 'animal' nature of Christ repeatedly, precisely because he could not be fully human if he did not assume true flesh (III.6:280-281; see also III.15:304; III.18, 318-319). By saying 'incarnate', we 'intend the substance of the flesh' (III.7:283); 'to have become incarnate means to have been united to the flesh' (III.11:291). Again, the human is seen as intimate part of the larger created order.<sup>178</sup>

And there are hints of this even in contemporary Orthodox writers who stress human freedom and singularity more strongly. Yannaras repeatedly speaks of the 'flesh' of the world in conjunction with Christ's flesh and rejects modern consumerism and rape of nature as antithetical to an Orthodox understanding of the human person in relationship (1984:234, 262). The incarnation is inclusive of all materiality: 'By his incarnation Christ enthroned the whole of material creation on the throne of God: creation became the flesh of the Word, and all the world became the Church' (249). Yannaras argues for a transfiguration of the created world through sacred art and architecture and calls for a new emphasis on the human body in light of contemporary 'dematerialization' (1984:264-270). Nellas interprets deification as 'christification' and stresses

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<sup>177</sup> Popovitch employs this theme strongly in his ecclesiology, consistently drawing similar connections between the 'Verbe' and the 'verbéique' nature of the universe, including arguing for its ultimate redemption (1997a:30-38; 1997b:421-443).

<sup>178</sup> In one place John says that 'had the Lord assumed a mindless soul, He would have assumed the soul of a brute animal' (III.18:319). While of course he insists that Christ assumed a human soul (with mind) it is interesting that this even appears as a hypothetical possibility. John throughout employs a fairly Aristotelian account of the soul (vegetative, sensitive and rational) and sees Christ having assumed these (III.15:304). The lower parts of such a soul are also present in animals and plants respectively. In this sense also other creatures are in some way present in the human Christ.

that humans are created in view of Christ, drawing on passages in Maximus, Cabasilas and Nikodimos for this. Any divine ‘image’ in humans thus is really a preparation for the true image Christ. He interprets the ‘theology of the image’ as an affirmation of the world and of materiality (including ‘marriage, science, politics, art and the rest’, 1987:95). Even Zizioulas, who stresses the human priesthood on behalf of creation so strongly, sees this preeminently accomplished in Christ: ‘matter is respected because it has been assumed by the hypostasis of the Son in the Incarnation’ (2006:96). The material world is redeemed and preserved through the incarnation and the resurrection (268). Paulos Mar Gregorios similarly argues that ‘human redemption can be understood only as an integral part of the redemption of the whole creation’ and suggests that this requires a view of Christ as assuming organic flesh ‘nurtured by air and water, vegetables and meat, like the rest of us’. This means that ‘his body is a *material* body—transformed of course, but transformed *matter*. Thus he shares his being with the whole created order: animals and birds, snakes and worms, flowers and seeds. All parts of creation are now reconciled to God. Sun and moon, planets and stars, pulsars and black holes—as well as the planet earth—are to participate in that final consumption of the redemption’ (in Birch et al., 1990:39, 43; emphases his).<sup>179</sup> Christ’s incarnation, then, has real implications for the rest of creation. Bartholomew also wonders: ‘How could we ignore the wider implications of the divine Word assuming flesh? Why do we fail to perceive created nature as the extended body of Christ?’ (2011:280). He calls this an Orthodox ‘deep ecology’ that relies on a ‘deep theology’ where ‘the word of God receives His full embodiment in creation’ (281). He chides us for failing ‘to perceive created nature as the extended Body of Christ’ and for ignoring the ‘cosmic proportions of divine incarnation’ (345). Christ’s redemptive work shows the ‘ontological unity between the human race and sacred creation’ (408). The incarnation hence for both Bartholomew and Gregorios is inclusive of all creatures.

In light of all this it might be more appropriate to say that *Christ* is the true microcosm and that *in him* all of creation is summed up. And it is thus brought together not because he was human, but because he was God in the flesh. Again, this does not mean that Christ did not become human, but it does suggest that his humanity includes other creatures. Just as his particularity as a male does not exclude women from salvation and his Jewishness does not exclude Gentiles, so his particularity as human does not exclude other creatures. All flesh, all bodies, and all matter participate in the incarnation. As Linzey says: ‘The Yes of God the Creator extends to all living, especially fleshly, beings: the *ousia* assumed in the incarnation is not only specifically human, it is also creaturely. If we ponder this fact we shall be released from the hubris in our relationship with other non-human beings’ (1994, 69). Similarly Edwards insists that ‘through the flesh assumed by the Logos, God communicates divine life to all flesh *in principle*’ (in Deane-Drummond & Clough, 2009:88).<sup>180</sup> In fact, this even follows neatly from the idea of the microcosm as it is interpreted by much of the tradition. If truly humans somehow sum up all of creation, if all of created materiality is somehow encapsulated in their flesh, then surely this must be particularly true of Christ. It thus might be more appropriate to focus this notion on

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<sup>179</sup> See also McDonagh who draws the same conclusion about Christ’s identification with all of created reality (1986:118).

Christ in the first place. This enables us to employ the notion of microcosm without assigning an exclusive place to humans as somehow fundamentally different from the rest of creation. Christ, then, is the true microcosm who sums up the entire universe, but he also is the true macrocosm, the one who reunites Creator and creation, spiritual and material, the true priest of creation who bears all of creation to the Father.

We can therefore affirm a fully *material* Christology which stresses that Christ lived in the material world within all its environmental and ecological dimensions and did so in a fully fleshly, material body. Christ's materiality participates in that of all creatures: it is part of the ecological web of this universe, shares its basic protein and molecular structure and ultimately also derives from the explosion of first generation stars, as all living beings and non-living entities in this universe do. Christ is both the true image of God and the true image and apex of all of creation, its microcosm. In this way, incarnation is affirmed to be inclusive of all creatures and not limited only to human beings. Hence the liturgical 'world', which already affirms the participation of all creatures in its texts, is seen to be opened even more fully to them: all of creation rejoices because all of creation is assumed in the incarnation and affirmed as part of the incarnate Word recapitulating all things in himself. When we celebrate nativity and the feasts of the Theotokos we join with all creation in the praise of the Creator who became a creature on behalf of all of creation.

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<sup>180</sup> He develops this more fully as 'deep incarnation', a term coined by Gregersen (2006:58-60). Elizabeth Johnson has also begun to develop such a notion of 'deep incarnation' in some of her work (2010).

## CHAPTER THREE

### **‘The Whole Creation Trembled’: From Lent to Holy Week**

#### 1.0 Introduction

The period of Lent developed in the fourth century mostly as a preparation of converts for baptism, although it is possible that a forty-day fast in some areas followed a celebration of Christ’s baptism and imitated his fast in the wilderness and was only later attached to the brief fasting preparation preceding the Triduum (Johnson, 2000:125-141, 183-206). In late fourth century Jerusalem, according to Egeria, catechumens presented themselves with a sponsor who vouched for their integrity before the bishop at the beginning of Great Lent (in Wilkinson, 1999:161-162). The Lenten period was a time of preparation during which the catechumens listened to daily lectures that explained the creed and the Lord’s Prayer. Similar preparatory periods and lectures emerged in other places. Chrysostom’s first series of homilies (on Genesis) was delivered daily during Lent (although it is addressed to the congregation and not specifically to catechumens). Increasingly, Lent also became a period of repentance and rededication for believers, especially as there were fewer catechumens and Lent lost its pre-baptismal character. The length of the fast also varied over time and from place to place. Cyril of Alexandria gives a one-week Lent in his first paschal letter, while all the following letters indicate much longer periods. Egeria reports an eight-week preparatory fast in Jerusalem in the late fourth century. Eventually a forty-day fast period became standard, although it was still counted differently in East and West (in the East both Saturday and Sunday were originally excluded from the fast) and finally three weeks (four Sundays) of pre-Lent emerged.<sup>181</sup> The liturgical themes for the Lenten Sundays also underwent development. Early on they focused especially on the forefathers: Adam and Eve, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others.<sup>182</sup> After iconoclasm and the seventh ecumenical council the Sunday of Orthodoxy became the first Sunday of Great Lent, commemorating the restoration of icons. The commemoration of Gregory Palamas on the second Sunday is of course even much later,<sup>183</sup> as are also the commemorations of John of the Ladder and Mary of Egypt (although they precede that of Palamas). Both were remembered as examples of the ascetic spirit of Lent, which became increasingly the predominant mood of this liturgical period.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> For this development see Ware’s introduction to the *Lenten Triodion* (2002:28-34).

<sup>182</sup> This is particularly evident in Romanos’ hymns for these Sundays and the ways these hymns are documented in liturgical texts.

<sup>183</sup> It dates to 1368. Ware argues for it as a continuation of the celebration of Orthodoxy, as it confirms Palamas’ victory over the heretics of his time (2002:52).

<sup>184</sup> The development of Holy Week has already briefly been mentioned in the chapter on Pascha and is closely connected to it. Holy Week as it is now celebrated is an amalgamation of the practices of Jerusalem and of Constantinople (Baldovin, 1987, Talley, 1991, Taft in Johnson, 2000:155-181; Pott, 2010:153-195). Although the focus of the chapter is primarily on Lent, references to Holy Week will be supplied when appropriate to the discussion. Liturgically, Holy Week is not part of Lent, although the liturgical texts for Holy Week are contained in the (Greek) *Lenten Triodion*.



## 1.1 'World' of the liturgy

The central theme of Lent is repentance. Schmemmann talks about a 'Lenten atmosphere' or 'climate' which 'make us see, feel, and experience that *bright sadness* which is the true message and gift of Lent' (1996:31, 32). This includes recognition of sinful acts, awareness of one's sinfulness, confession (in prayer and in the sacrament of confession) and metanoia (turning around). Lent exhorts to a fundamental change of life. This is supported and made possible through the abstinence from certain foods (meat, dairy products, eggs, fish, oil, and wine) and a focus on prayer and works of charity. Abstaining from certain types of food (and in theory from certain meals altogether) is the most visible and obvious part of the Lenten fast, but is by no means the only or even the most important part.<sup>185</sup> The ancient preachers remind their listeners that abstaining from evil thoughts and deeds is even more important than avoiding certain foods. Chrysostom, for example, exhorts his congregation in Antioch: 'Abstinence from food, after all, is undertaken for this purpose, to curb the exuberance of the flesh and bring the beast under control. The person fasting ought most of all to keep anger in check, learn the lesson of mildness and kindness, have a contrite heart, banish the flood of unworthy passions, keep before one's eyes that unsleeping eye and that incorruptible tribunal, avoid becoming enthralled by money, be lavish in almsgiving, drive all ill-will to one's neighbour from the soul' (Gen.8.14:113). Thus guarding the passions of anger, envy and pride were as much to be eliminated as excessive indulgence in food or drink. Schmemmann stresses the preparatory role of Lent: 'Easter is our return every year to our own Baptism, whereas Lent is our preparation for that return... Lent is the liberation of our enslavement to sin, from the prison of "this world"' (1996:14, 28).

Nor is the negative the most important issue, even if abstinence is a central theme. Rather the effort of Lent is a kind of cleansing and preparation, an openness to the gifts of God. Again, Chrysostom says:

Do you see, dearly beloved, what true fasting really is? Let us perform this kind, and not entertain the facile notion held by many that the essence of fasting lies in going without food till evening. This is not the end in view, but that we should demonstrate, along with abstinence from food, abstinence also from whatever is harmful, and should give close attention to spiritual duties. The person fasting ought to be reserved, peaceful, meek, humble, indifferent to the esteem of this world. You see, just as one has neglected the soul, so it is necessary to neglect empty esteem as well, and to have regard only for him who examines our inmost being, and with great care to direct prayers and confessions to God, and provide for oneself according to one's ability the help that comes from almsgiving' (8.15, 114).

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<sup>185</sup> Ware points this out repeatedly in his introduction, especially in the section on 'the true nature of fasting' (2002:13-28). Even Chrysostom acknowledges it in his homilies: 'Accordingly, let the person who partakes of food and is unable to fast give evidence of more generous almsgiving, fervent prayers, and a heightened enthusiasm for listening to the divine sayings; let such a person be reconciled with enemies and eradicate from the soul all vindictiveness. If that is the intention, then such a person has practised real fasting, and the kind the Lord requires most of all' (10.3, 129); 'If, on the other hand, we partake of nourishment in moderation, let us not at all be ashamed; it is the Lord, after all, who has fitted us with a body of such a kind that could not otherwise be sustained without partaking of that food, provided there is no going to excess. In fact, this moderate consumption contributes most of all to good health and condition. Don't you daily observe thousands of disorders stemming from laden tables and immoderate eating? What is the cause of gout? of migraine? of the flood of noxious humours? of countless other ailments? Do they not spring from intemperance and from pouring ourselves more wine than we should?' (10.5, 130). The liturgies themselves also point this out occasionally: 'Let us keep the Fast not only refraining from food, but by becoming strangers to all the bodily passions; that we who are enslaved to the tyranny of the flesh may become worthy to partake of the Lamb, the Son of God, slain of His own will for the sake of the world, and spiritually may celebrate the feast of the Saviour's Resurrection from the dead. So shall we be raised on high in the glory of the virtues, and through our righteous actions we shall give joy to the Lord who loves mankind' (First Tuesday, Aposticha, 217-18).

The 'spiritual duties' of humility and charity are just as important as the efforts of abstinence. This is also evident in the juxtaposition of 'negative' and 'positive' in the famous Lenten prayer of Ephrem the Syrian where the first petition asks for liberation from 'sloth, despair, lust of power and idle talk' while the second prays for 'the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love'.<sup>186</sup>

Furthermore, the theme of joy pervades the Lenten liturgies as much as the sense of sin and need for repentance. During Forgiveness Vespers, on the threshold of Lent, we sing: 'Let us set out with joy upon the season of the Fast, and prepare ourselves for spiritual combat. Let us purify our soul and cleanse our flesh; and as we fast from food, let us abstain also from every passion. Rejoicing in the virtues of the Spirit may we persevere with love, and so be counted worthy to see the solemn Passion of Christ our God, and with great spiritual gladness to behold His holy Passover' (Forgiveness Vespers, Stichera, 181). This summarises excellently many aspects of the fast: its joy, its stress on 'spiritual combat', its purification of both soul and body, abstaining from food but also from passions such as anger or envy, the acquisition of virtues, especially love, and above all its participation in and re-living of Christ's passion and resurrection. The first day of the fast proper (Monday of the first week) reiterates the focus on joy in a sessional hymn: 'Let us joyfully begin the all-hallowed season of abstinence' (190).<sup>187</sup> This theme of joy is often repeated during the fast. Frequently joy and mourning are juxtaposed to each other in paradoxical fashion. Bulgakov comments on this juxtaposition in a Lenten homily:

Different days of the Church Year produce in us different spiritual feelings. The air we breathe on weekdays appears to differ from that which we breathe on Sundays; and both differ from great feasts. And completely exceptional in our life is the period of the Great Fast, which is a luminous time and a time of repentance, a joyous time and a difficult time. Both a solemn seriousness and a particular lightness enter the soul when it surrenders itself to repentance. Our soul rises above the level of the everyday and breathes the rarefied, invigorating air of the heights. The Great Fast gives us a sense of responsibility for our life, a vision of ourselves before God in the light of eternity, together with an acute consciousness of our sins, as if a last judgement upon ourselves. (2008a:73)

The Lenten period hence is especially marked by discordance (to employ Ricoeur's language), as it tries to do justice to the very experience of discordance in our lives. Of course, Lent cannot be seen in isolation from Pascha. It prepares for and leads up to Holy Week. Yet, it is a particularly intense and important yearly period in the Christian life. Each year anew we make a special effort of preparation. Each Lent is a new beginning. And each Lent recognises that sin and evil are still a presence in our lives and that we do not yet live in the eschaton. The ascetic effort of Lent seeks to bring this period of fulfilment and redemption closer and turn it into more of a reality.

Great Lent is the most important preparatory period for a feast, as it leads up to Holy Week and the feast of Pascha. Yet almost every Wednesday and Friday have a Lenten flavour and the same fasting rules apply. There are also three other Lenten periods in the church year: the Nativity fast that begins on Nov. 15th and ends on the feast of the Nativity (Dec. 25th), the Dormition fast (the first two weeks of August, preceding

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<sup>186</sup> For a more detailed exploration of this prayer, see Hopko (2003:72-112).

<sup>187</sup> 'O ye faithful, with joy let us enter upon the beginning of the Fast. Let us not be of sad countenance but let us wash our faces in the water of dispassion; and let us bless and exalt Christ above all for ever' (First Monday, O8, 192); 'All mortal life is but one day, so it is said, to those who labour with love. There are forty days in the Fast: let us keep them all with joy' (ibid., O9, 194).

the feast of the Dormition) and the fast of Sts. Peter and Paul that begins on the Sunday after Pentecost and ends with the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul on June 29th (it is thus of variable length, depending on when Pascha falls).<sup>188</sup> Similar fasting rules apply during the fasts, although fish, wine and oil are generally allowed more frequently in these other fasts than they are during Great Lent (where the Annunciation and Palm Sunday are the only two days on which fish is permitted). The liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, which significantly marks the mood of Great Lent, is also celebrated only during that time (although Schmemmann suggests that it may originally have been celebrated during all fasting periods), as is the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete during the first and fifth weeks of the fast. Thus, although in theory (and in practice still in the monasteries) this period is also a fast from the Eucharist, in practice there are far more services during this time and paradoxically many Orthodox will take communion more frequently during Lent than at other times of the year (in fact, of those who commune only once a year many take this communion at a liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts during Lent instead of a regular Sunday liturgy).<sup>189</sup> Hence, effectively, Great Lent and especially Holy Week has become a far more intense time than other periods of the year.

## 1.2 Symbolism, Polyphony, Limit-Expressions

Discordance is central to the mood of Lent itself. The paradox between fasting and joy, abstinence and preparation, recognition of abject sinfulness and reliance on God's abundant mercy are constantly reiterated throughout the Lenten period. For example, statements such as the following are made repeatedly: 'I have angered Thee beyond measure, O Christ, and I dare not look up at the height of heaven. But knowing Thy compassion, merciful Lord, I cry: I have sinned, be merciful to me and save me' (Prodigal Son, O5, 117). Paradoxically, repentance is both a tremendous human effort (to which we are constantly exhorted throughout this period) and a gift of grace: 'Come, O ye people, and today let us accept the grace of the Fast as a gift from God, and as a time for repentance, in which we may find mercy with the Saviour' (First Monday, O1, 191). Bulgakov stresses this paradox in his Lenten homily: 'During the Great Fast, the Church clothes itself in dark vestments and returns as it were to the Old Testament. Prayers of repentance are unceasingly repeated in the Church. However, we enter the Great Fast through the rite of forgiveness accompanied by the singing of Paschal hymns; and in us the darkness of sin is pierced by the light of Christ's Resurrection' (2008a:74). Schmemmann's 'bright sadness' points to the same paradoxical reality.<sup>190</sup>

<sup>188</sup> A similar preparation on a much smaller scale are the prayers that are read in preparation for holy communion. They express repentance and unworthiness in much of the language also used during Lent, including excessive statements that designate oneself as the very worst of sinners and utterly unworthy to come before God. Thus, as every Sunday is a little Pascha, so every preparation for this Sunday is a miniature Lent.

<sup>189</sup> Schmemmann is strongly critical of this practice. He frequently comments on the relationship between fasting and the Eucharist in his reflections on *Great Lent* (1996:49-55, 107-133).

<sup>190</sup> Taft comments on the use of paradox in liturgical poetry, especially in regard to Holy Saturday: 'The spirit of this poetry, radically different from that of Mary's Compline lament, is decidedly victorious. The method used is paradox. The one who is life, dies in order to slay death and raise the dead. He who is entombed, opens the tombs and raises the dead. Condemned as a transgressor, he frees all from guilt. The deliverer, he is sold into captivity. He who hung the earth upon the waters, hangs on a cross. The fairest of all becomes a corpse without comeliness, in order to beautify all nature. The light of the world, hidden in a dark tomb, illumines all things. He whom nothing can contain, who holds the earth in his hands, is buried in the bowels of the earth. Uplifted on the cross, he lifts up all. Descending into the earth, he raises all

Lent also abounds in excessive and superlative language. Much of this language seems designed to lead the participant to greater contrition: ‘O Jesus my God, as the Prodigal Son now accept me also in repentance. All my life I have lived in carelessness and provoked Thee to anger’ (Prodigal Son, O1, 115). Or a little later: ‘I am filled with every shameful thing and dare not look up at the height of heaven, for I have foolishly bowed down to sin’ (O4, 117). Presumably not every single person praying this phrase has indeed lived his or her *entire* life in carelessness, filled with *every* shameful thing and continually provoked God to anger. These are not literal statements, but are hyperbolic ones designed to move us to repentance. The liturgy is full of such language. To give one more example: ‘Ruled by corrupting thoughts, I am full of darkness and separated far from Thee, and I have lost all possession of myself, O merciful Lord. Therefore save me as I fall before Thee in repentance. O pure Mother of God, the only restoration of the fallen, raise me up, for I am wholly crushed and humbled by every kind of sin’ (Prodigal Son, O8, 120). Such superlatives are particularly evident in the most famous and maybe most beautiful of all Lenten services, the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, which is celebrated in four parts during the first week of Lent and in its entirety on Thursday of the fifth week.<sup>191</sup> It exhorts us to repentance by reminding us of many biblical figures who sinned and by parading before us those who repented and put forward ascetic effort. Throughout the canon is formulated in the first person singular. Each person present is meant to identify with this ‘I’ in prayer. This ‘I’ compares itself to various figures in the Scriptures and accuses itself of having sinned more grievously than any of the persons mentioned (or of not having followed any of the positive examples). The canon abounds in excessive language: ‘More than all men have I sinned; I alone have sinned against Thee’ (O2, 381); ‘Thou alone, my soul, hast opened the windows of the wrath of thy God’ (ibid., 383); ‘I alone have sinned against Thee, I have sinned more than all men’ (O3, 385); ‘I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned against Thee; be merciful to me. For there is no sinner whom I have not surpassed in my offences’ (ibid., 386); ‘No sin has there been in life, no evil deed, no wickedness, that I have not committed, O Saviour. I have sinned as no one ever before, in mind, word and intent, in disposition, thought and act’ (O4, 390); ‘I fall before Thee, and as tears I offer Thee my words. I have sinned as the Harlot never sinned, and I have transgressed as no other man on earth. But take pity on Thy creature, O Master, and call me back’ (O7, 404). And indeed this is where the liturgical limit-expressions are the most obvious. Sin and fallenness are posited in quite extreme terms within the liturgy. The Lenten liturgies especially push the participants to the boundaries of experience, describe their experience in the superlative, in excess: ‘My mind is wounded, my body has grown feeble, my spirit is sick, my speech has lost its power, my life is dead, the end is at the door’ (Last Judgement, O9, 162).

And not just the language is excessive, so are the actions. During this time prostrations and kneeling are much more frequent than at other times, especially during the liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. The

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who are buried there. The cornerstone, he is enclosed in rock. The metaphors and epithets are full of light and joy: sun of justice; morning star; livegiving seed, sown in the earth with tears; New Adam; source of the river of life; light that knows no evening; giver of life; sweet springtime; bridegroom coming forth from his chamber; daystar without evening; vine of life’ (in Johnson, 2000:171).

<sup>191</sup> All page references for the Great Canon refer to the full celebration on Thursday of the Fifth Week instead of its partial versions during the first week. For a theological analysis of the Great Canon, see Getcha (2002:105-120).

physical fasting requires an effort (depending on one's usual eating habits this can seem a quite extreme effort—and it can be very much a boundary experience in a society with a fast-food and high-meat diet). Similarly, the length and frequency of services can seem excessive, especially during Holy Week. If one attends all the services on the final days of Holy Week, one literally loses all normal sense of time and space. Every-day time and space are suspended and we move in the liminal time of the Triduum. Here again anamnesis and eschaton come together.<sup>192</sup>

There is also an abundance of symbols used during this time. The cross is probably the most significant symbol of this period. The Sunday of the Adoration of the Cross on the third Sunday of Great Lent recalls its importance. The mood of this Sunday is quite different from that of the Elevation of the Cross celebrated in mid-September, which is far more victorious and militant. On the Sunday of the Adoration of the Cross the mood is more sombre and primarily one of gratitude for Christ's death and further call to repentance,<sup>193</sup> including the reminder that the Christian life consists in bearing the cross as Christ did, 'for He Himself became our pattern and example' (Stichera, Praises, 347). Such cross-bearing is a theme also in other of the Lenten liturgies, 'Bidden farewell to the world and all that is in it, let us now be crucified with Christ; let us endure outrage, mockery and other sufferings, that we may be glorified with Him' (First Friday, O5, 269), although it is not as frequent as one might assume. The cross is far more often used to exhort to gratitude and further repentance than seen as an example for guiding one's own life.

Another central theme of Lent is forgiveness. This is particularly clear on the Sundays of preparation for Lent. The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee and that of the Prodigal Son both call to repentance, but also remind of God's forgiveness in the figure of the father and in Christ's commendation of the tax collector. Even the Sunday of the Last Judgement gives a message of hope along with its warning. This preparatory period is crowned with the Vespers of Forgiveness which marks at the same time the beginning of Great Lent proper. Forgiveness thus is the door into the period of repentance. And this is evident not only in the texts of the liturgy but most palpably in its actions, as each person in the parish asks forgiveness of each other person present with a prostration and an embrace. In many parishes the canon from the Paschal matins is sung at the same time, so that the joy of Pascha is quite literally the threshold across which one steps into Lent. This moment exemplifies most clearly the paradox and polyphony of Lent and the entire Christian life, where concordance and discordance continually battle with each other.

Illness is also an important theme. On the fourth and fifth Sundays, the parable of the Good Samaritan is repeatedly used in order to identify with the person who has been robbed and beaten.<sup>194</sup> The state of the person at prayer is vividly described in terms of illness and the need for healing:

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<sup>192</sup> Taft attributes this also to the confluence of the Constantinopolitan and hagiopolite liturgies, as the Byzantine celebrations were more anamnestic and the hagiopolite system more mimetic (in Johnson, 2000:179).

<sup>193</sup> Although here also joy is present. For example, in the seventh ode we sing: 'This day, ye peoples, let us dance and sing to the music of the harp, and greatly rejoice at the veneration of the Cross, giving glory to Christ who was nailed upon it, the God of our fathers, who alone is blessed and greatly glorified' (343).

<sup>194</sup> 'Adam fell among thieving thoughts: his mind was robbed, his soul wounded, and he lay naked with none to help. The priest that was before the Law did not attend to him; the Levite that came after the Law did not look upon him. Thou

In my wretchedness, I have fallen among the thieves of my own thoughts. My mind has been despoiled, and cruelly have I been beaten; all my soul is wounded, and stripped of virtues I lie naked upon the highway of life. Seeing me in bitter pain and thinking that my wounds could not be healed, the priest neglected me and would not look at me. Unable to endure my soul-destroying agony, the Levite when he saw me passed by on the other side. But Thou, O Christ my God, wast pleased to come, not from Samaria but incarnate from Mary: in Thy love for mankind, grant me healing and pour upon me Thy great mercy. (Fifth Wednesday, Stichera, 370)<sup>195</sup>

Thus we move from the prodigal, who is mentioned especially in the canons throughout the first weeks of Lent, who must make a major effort for returning (and is clearly at fault for his sin) in the final weeks of Lent to the man attacked by the robbers who is in need of healing and recognises his own inability to care for his wounds.

One of the most central symbols of Lent is the figure of Adam. As the deliverance of Adam is a major part of the liturgy of Pascha, so Adam and his sin is a predominant theme of Lent. The liturgies frequently refer to him. Forgiveness Sunday is dedicated to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise, but many other liturgical texts during Lent also refer to Adam. Most commonly in the liturgy Adam stands for all of us, for all of humanity as fallen and in need of redemption by Christ. He is the contrast or shadow to the second and true Adam, Christ. Adam's fall is mentioned because it is redemption in Christ that is celebrated. Since this redemption is seen primarily in terms of freedom from bondage, Adam becomes the figure standing for the bonded one who is freed. Yet, at the same time, Adam is also each person who prays the prayers of repentance. Adam is *me*, my recognition of my own sinfulness, fallenness and inadequacy. Adam is hence neither just a 'summary' figure nor simply an individual. Adam is a symbol (in Ricoeur's sense of symbol) for all human shortcomings and especially my own sin. Thus, while Adam can be spoken of in the third person singular (and possibly even the third person plural), the liturgy most frequently speaks of Adam in the first person singular (but as we do so together, this also has a plural connotation).<sup>196</sup> We will return to Adam later in this chapter.

This taking on of biblical figures occurs throughout the liturgical texts but is particularly evident during Lent. Various persons serve as symbols for the ascetic effort Lent requires, such as a Mary of Egypt and John Climacus. Indeed, the Great Canon parades before us a whole cloud of witnesses both to human fallenness and the ascetic effort. The publican and the Pharisee, the prodigal son,<sup>197</sup> Adam, various Old Testament figures, the man fallen among robbers between Jerusalem and Jericho, Mary of Bethany, the harlot,<sup>198</sup> Judas, Peter, all are represented frequently in the first person and applied to the lives of the people at prayer: 'When I think upon the wicked things I have done, I flee for refuge to Thy tender mercy, like the

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alone hast helped him, O God who camest not from Samaria but from the Theotokos: glory be to Thee' (Fourth Sunday, Aposticha, 369). This parable is used over and over again in the liturgies of that and the following week.

<sup>195</sup> It is also interesting that this Vespers precedes the reading of the Great Canon which is full of self-accusatory statements. Thus the ideas of sin as disease by which we are victimised and sin as transgression for which we are fully responsible are again closely connected here.

<sup>196</sup> Hopko sees him as a figure 'for every kind of sin in general and no specific sin in particular' (2003:31).

<sup>197</sup> 'As the Prodigal Son I come to Thee, merciful Lord. I have wasted my whole life in a foreign land; I have scattered the wealth which Thou gavest me, O Father. Receive me in repentance, O God, and have mercy on me' (Vespers, Litya, 113).

<sup>198</sup> 'I have sinned as the Harlot never sinned, and I have transgressed as no other man on earth' (Last Judgement, O7, 160). Identification with the harlot is also frequently used in the prayers preparing for holy communion.

Publican, and the Harlot with her tears, and the Prodigal Son. Therefore I fall down before Thee, merciful Lord. Condemn me not, O God, but spare me and have mercy upon me' (Penitential Stichera for Sundays of Lent, 185). Similar imaginative identifications are present throughout almost all the services. Schmemmann stresses this: 'The events of sacred history are revealed as events of *my* life, God's acts in the past as acts aimed at *me* and *my* salvation, the tragedy of sin and betrayal as *my* personal tragedy. My life is shown to me as part of the great and all-embracing fight between God and the powers of darkness which rebel against Him' (1996:64; see also Macaire de Simonons-Petra, 1992:45). Ware also stresses this anamnestic element within the liturgical texts in his introduction to the *Lenten Triodion*: 'All this is not to be seen merely as the bare commemoration of occurrences in the distant past. On the contrary, through the liturgical celebration we *relive* these events, participating in them as contemporaries' (2002:57). He analyses this in terms of a notion of liturgical time that is distinct from clock time, noting the many mentions of 'today' in the texts (especially of Holy Week). He insists that 'we shall not understand the meaning of these last two weeks in the Triodion unless we listen to this word *Today* that resounds at each service. It is not a mere metaphor or an instance of poetic licence, but embodies a specific spiritual experience. All that was witnessed by the crowds in Holy Week, all the words addressed to the disciples, all the sufferings undergone by Christ—these are all to be experienced here and now *by me*' (2002:57). The liturgies themselves make this clear: 'Make ready before thy departure, O my soul; prepare thyself for the life that is to come. Christ hastens to suffer for thy sake, that He may glorify thee: make haste to suffer with Him, to be crucified and to die with Him' (Palm Sunday Compline, O8; 508). Schmemmann also comments on the importance of this 'today': 'It is in the Church's celebration *today* that an historical fact becomes an *event* for us, for me, a power in my life, a memory, a joy' (1996:83). This is not merely an individualised pious appropriation. It is a personal participation in a larger event that transcends me. We participate in it not as isolated individuals, the way we might watch a concert or a performance in a theatre. Rather, we perform this work together as an ecclesial body (*leitourgia*).

### 1.3 Actions

Lent obviously has an impact on our daily lives. Most explicitly of all the liturgical periods does it require concrete actions, which affect how we conduct our lives. A change of lifestyle with different food, more frequent prayers and services, increased works of charity and devotional readings is expected. Repentance does not happen merely in church, but most fully in our lives. It requires *metanoia*, a real 'turning around'. Chrysostom is quite explicit in the sorts of changes he expects his congregation to undertake during Lent:

I'm not making this point [that fasting is not worthwhile if they don't come to church] to undermine the importance of fasting—God forbid: on the contrary, I'm all in favour of it. Instead, my intention is to teach you to take an active part in spiritual matters with alert mind, not just follow along out of habit. The shameful thing, you see, is not attendance at this spiritual teaching after partaking of food, but attendance with an attitude of sloth, addiction to passion, and failure to control the movements of the flesh. There is nothing wrong with eating—God forbid; the harmful thing is gluttony, stuffing yourself with food in excess of need, and ruining your stomach—something, after all, that destroys even the pleasure that comes from food. So, too, in like manner, there is nothing wrong with drinking in moderation, but rather with surrendering to drunkenness and losing control of your reasoning through excess. (*Gen.10.2:128*)

In a different homily he chides them because they find the games and races more interesting than church attendance:

On a Friday, when your Master was being crucified on behalf of the world and such a sacrifice was being offered, and paradise was being opened, and the robber was being led back to his old native land, the curse was being undone, and sin was disappearing, and temporal war was being destroyed, and God was being reconciled to human beings, and everything was being changed—on that day you should have been fasting and giving praise and sending up prayers of thanksgiving for all the blessings in the world to the one who made them. Then why did you leave the church and the spiritual sacrifice, and the gathering of brothers and sisters and the sobriety of fasting? Were you carried off to that spectacle as the devil's captive? (*Against the Games* 164; Wendy & Allen:119-120)

It is interesting that Chrysostom so strongly stresses the present tense of the crucifixion. He clearly expects his fellow worshippers to experience the sacrifice to happen within the liturgy and to see its real effects take place. The repentance practised during the Lenten period both recalls an important past event, Christ's death and suffering, which it makes present within the liturgy (especially of Holy Week) and prepares even more consciously than usual for the fullness of the eschatological expectation that begins already within it.

## 2. How is creation already present?

One would think that there is no place for non-human creation in the Lenten liturgies. And indeed the liturgical texts for Lent do not mention non-human creatures anywhere near as frequently as the festal texts. Why would animals or trees need to repent, since presumably they do not sin?<sup>199</sup> Yet our sin affects the world around us and cannot be separated from it. How we live has an impact on all other creatures and the ground itself. Of course, the ancient homilists and liturgical poets have no sense of the extent of the devastation we face today. Yet a recognition of sin and fallenness is linked to the larger cosmic story even for them.

### 2.1 The 'Tree' of the cross

One of the most significant ways in which non-human nature plays a role during Lent is heavily symbolic. Yet since symbolism in general plays such a significant role during this time, these instances should not be dismissed. Probably the most important symbol in Lent and especially during Holy Week is the 'tree' (or lit. 'wood', ξύλον) of the cross. Although it refers to the cross of Christ it carries larger symbolic connotations. It is explicitly referred to as a tree in order to establish a relationship with the other important tree: the tree of Paradise. The 'tree' of the cross replaces the forbidden tree in Paradise. It becomes the new tree of life, opening the path to new life.<sup>200</sup> Salvation is wrought by a tree, just as damnation came through a tree. The dead trunk of the tree of the cross is brought to life and flourishing by Christ. The liturgy abounds in references to these trees throughout, but the theme is obviously most explicit on the Sunday of the Adoration

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<sup>199</sup> Some theologians have recently challenged this common assumption (Deane-Drummond, 2009:167; Edwards, 1995:86). Theokritoff, however, is quite emphatic that 'only man has strayed from God's purpose' (2009:167; also Bulgakov, 2004:323). Wirzba makes a helpful distinction: 'Has nature sinned that it needs redemption? How we answer this question depends on what we mean by redemption. If we understand it as the expiation for guilt, then nature does not need redemption. If we understand it as the regeneration of life within a context of suffering and death, then the idea begins to make some biological sense' (2003:19).

<sup>200</sup> Thus, there are actually three trees at stake here: the cross, the tree of good and evil, and the tree of life. The last two are frequently conflated by the liturgical texts.



of the Cross. On this Sunday, the cross is addressed and hailed as the door to Paradise and as the bridge between earth and heaven:

Hail! life-giving Cross, unconquerable trophy of the true faith, door to Paradise, succour of the faithful, rampart set about the Church. Through thee the curse is utterly destroyed, the power of death is swallowed up, and we are raised from earth to heaven: invincible weapon, adversary of demons, glory of martyrs, true ornament of holy monks, haven of salvation, bestowing on the world great mercy. Come, Adam and Eve, our first father and mother, who fell from the choir on high through the envy of the murderer of man, when of old with bitter pleasure ye tasted from the tree in Paradise. See, the Tree of the Cross, revered by all, draws near! Run with haste and embrace it joyfully, and cry to it with faith: O precious Cross, thou art our succour; partaking of thy fruit, we have gained incorruption; we are restored once more to Eden, and we have received great mercy. (Stichera, 335)

The cross is the tree that returns us to paradise and its original tree. These trees are consistently personified in the liturgical texts and play an important role in the redemptive story. And again, all of creation responds to the horror of this event: ‘Beholding Thee, the Fashioner and Creator of all, hanging naked on the Cross, the whole creation was transfixed by fear, and it lamented; the light of the sun grew dark and the earth quaked; the rocks were split and the splendour of the temple was rent in twain; the dead rose from their tombs and the angelic powers cried in amazement: “O strange wonder! The judge is judged, and suffers willingly, for the salvation and renewal of the world”’ (Litya, 336). This response by the larger creation to the crucifixion is a common theme.

A clear relationship is established between the two trees: ‘In Paradise of old the tree stripped me bare; for by giving me its fruit to eat, the enemy brought in death. But now the Tree of the Cross that clothes men with the garment of life has been set up on earth, and the whole world is filled with boundless joy’ (Sessional Hymn, 337).<sup>201</sup> The wood of this tree is explicitly called blessed repeatedly: ‘O mighty wonder! Before us stands the Wood, on which Christ was crucified in the flesh. The world venerates it and, illumined, cries aloud: “Great is the power of the Cross! When devils look upon it, they are burnt; by the sign of the Cross they are consumed with fire.” O pure and holy Wood, I call thee blessed; I honour thee and worship thee with fear, and I give glory unto God who through thee has bestowed upon me life without end’ (Stichera of Cross, 351). Again, we see all of heaven and earth rejoicing in the cross: ‘Let heaven and earth praise with one accord, for the all-blessed Cross is now set forth before us all, on which Christ’s Body was nailed when He was offered in sacrifice. Let us venerate it with great rejoicing in our souls’ (O1, 338).<sup>202</sup> And this explicitly includes non-human nature, namely precisely trees who are the main character here: ‘Let all the trees of the forest dance and sing, as they behold their fellow-tree, the Cross, today receiving veneration: for Christ, as holy David prophesied, has exalted it on high./I died through a tree, but I have found a Tree of Life, O Cross of Christ. Thou art my invincible protector, my strong defence against the demons. Venerating thee this day, I cry aloud: Sanctify me by thy glory’ (O9, 345). There is even a suggestion that this salvation extends to all the world: ‘O come, let us sing a new song, celebrating the overthrow of hell, for Christ has risen from the tomb;

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<sup>201</sup> This theme is reiterated during the liturgy of Mid-Pentecost: ‘The tree of disobedience sprouted forth death for the world, but the Tree of the Cross blossomed forth life and incorruption’ (Aposticha, 207). The liturgy for the feast of the Transfiguration also mentions it: ‘O thrice-blessed Tree, on which Christ the King and Lord was stretched! Through thee the beguiler fell, who tempted mankind with the tree. He was caught in the trap set by God, who wast crucified upon thee in the flesh, granting peace unto our souls’ (O5, 487).

death He has taken captive, and saved all the world' (O3, 338).<sup>203</sup> It is within the church that we enter into this new paradise: 'The Church has been revealed as a second Paradise, having within it, like the first Paradise of old, a tree of life, Thy Cross, O Lord. By touching it we share in immortality' (O5, 341). Church and larger creation here are closely linked and the tree is central in this connection.

The parallel between the two trees is reiterated by many homilists. The paschal homily attributed to Hippolytus, for example, describes the 'tree' of salvation from which we are nourished (i.e. the cross) in colourful terms, including a close depiction of its leaves, roots, branches, its 'delicious wind', fruits, protection. It affirms that this is a 'tree of celestial dimensions' and sustains the whole universe, it joins the world, touches the sky, and is 'all and everywhere' (SC27:176-78). Basil of Seleucia in his homily on Pascha also briefly compares the wood of the cross with Adam's tree (SC187:207). Ephrem the Syrian puts it the most poetically: 'Greatly saddened was the Tree of Life/when it beheld Adam stolen away from it;/it sank down into the virgin ground and was hidden/—to burst forth and reappear on Golgotha;/humanity, like birds that are chased,/took refuge in it/so that they might return them to their proper home./The chaser was chased away, while the doves/that had been chased/now hop with joy in Paradise' (Virginité XVI.10). Not only is the tree of paradise personified here as mourning over Adam's departure, but it is that very tree which reemerges on Golgotha. Furthermore, humans are compared to birds that enjoy building nests in this tree as 'their proper home'. John Damascene employs the relationship between the two trees as a justification for the veneration of various liturgical items (*Orthodox Faith* IV.11:350-51).

During Holy Week another tree is also frequently mentioned, namely the fig tree that carried no fruit and was withered by Christ's command. This tree is repeatedly used as a warning to bear fruit: 'Those who are barren of good actions are like the fig tree. Let us avoid its fruitlessness, lest we be dried up as it once was, prefiguring the synagogue that was covered with leaves but bore no fruit... O brethren, let us flee from the fruitlessness of the fig tree and understand the meaning of this example. May we not be withered as it once was, when He who loves mankind came to it in hunger' (Palm Sunday, Compline, O1, 507).<sup>204</sup> It is unfortunate that many of the references to the fig tree associate it with the 'Jews' or the 'synagogue' and rejects these as not having born fruit but producing only leaves.<sup>205</sup> Yet the liturgical texts always apply this imagery also to the person praying these texts now: 'May the reproach of the fig tree not overtake thee; but make haste, my soul, and from the soil of thy heart bear good fruit for Christ thy Creator, and offer it to Him in repentance' (Sessional Hymn, 508). And this tree is also closely associated with the 'last times': 'From the

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<sup>202</sup> 'There is joy today in heaven and on earth, for the sign of the Cross is made manifest to the world. The thrice-blessed Cross is set before us, and to all who show it veneration it is a fount of over-flowing grace' (Cross, O4, 340).

<sup>203</sup> 'Give us peace and grant us that we may come to the Holy Passion that has saved the world; and may we worship at the radiant Festival of Easter, the Lord's Day that brings light and joy to all creation' (Cross, O9, 346).

<sup>204</sup> The theme is already present in the penitential Vespers for the Sunday evenings of Great Lent: 'Woe is me, for I am like the barren fig tree, and I fear that I also shall be cursed and cut down. But, heavenly Husbandman, Christ my God, make my dry and barren soul bear fruit. Receive me as the Prodigal Son, and have mercy upon me' (186); 'Sinner though I be, O Saviour, cut me not down as the barren fig tree. Grant me forgiveness for my many years of sin, and water my soul with tears of repentance, that as fruit I may offer Thee acts of mercy and compassion' (187).

<sup>205</sup> For a consideration of the antisemitic language in the services of Holy Week, see Theokritoff (2003). For a treatment of similar language in Byzantine homilies, see Cunningham (1999:46-68).

fig tree, O my soul, learn to recognise the coming of the end. When its leaves are tender and it puts forth branches, then the time of summer is at hand; and when thou shalt see these things, know that the end is near, even at the doors' (Holy Monday, Compline, O9, 522). This fearful time is depicted as winter and closely connected symbolically with the passion: 'When the Teacher spoke of flight on the Sabbath and in the winter, He foretold darkly, as in a riddle, the storm of the present age, which is the seventh day of the week, when the end shall come as the winter. Thou hast heard, my soul, how on that day the fearful coming of thy Master shall be as swift as the lightning that shines across the heaven. Make haste, then, and be ready' (ibid., O8, 521). The same imagery can also be associated with one's personal end: 'Think, wretched soul, upon the hour of the end; recall with fear how the fig tree was cut down. Work diligently with the talent that is given to thee; be vigilant and cry aloud: May we not be left outside the bridal chamber of Christ!' (Holy Tuesday, Sessional Hymn, 525).

This heavy use of tree imagery is interesting. Although the Greek generally employs the word for 'wood' (ξύλον), clear parallels to 'trees' are repeatedly drawn and thus the term stands as a shorthand for tree. The tree is understood here as a symbol of life and since the primary message of Christ's death on the cross is one of life, the connection becomes possible. The further connection with the tree of life in paradise then becomes natural (also called ξύλον in the Septuagint<sup>206</sup>), especially since Christ's death is interpreted as a way of liberating Adam and reopening paradise. Probably this symbolic language does not lead directly to any change in our destructive attitude to trees. Only in one instance cited above is this tree considered to have any implications for other trees and presumably no real implications for concrete actions ever followed from that. Yet maybe now at a time when we realise the incredible importance of trees not only for particular ecosystems but indeed for the climate of the whole planet (as major providers of oxygen and users of carbon dioxide), maybe it would become possible to draw on some of this symbolism in which a tree plays such a significant role? Theokritoff certainly suggests as much when she says: 'When the Creator sees his world polluted through human sin, how does he respond? *He plants a tree*. "One tree in Eden brought death to man, but another on Golgotha has granted eternal life to the world." The remedy has precedents in the natural world, in the way he has appointed ordinary trees to function for the health of his creation' (2009:171-72; emphasis hers).

## 2.2 Ascetic practice

Another predominantly symbolic use of nature is in the celebration of the ascetics who are commemorated during Great Lent. Several times these are portrayed as contributing to the fruitfulness of the world or as making the earth flourish. Gregory Palamas, for example, is affirmed within the liturgy to give joy to the whole creation. At the beginning of the vespers for Palamas Sunday, we ask:

What hymns of praise shall we sing in honour of the holy bishop? He is the trumpet of theology, the herald of the fire of grace, the honoured vessel of the Spirit, the unshaken pillar of the Church, the great joy of the inhabited earth, the river of wisdom, the candlestick of the light, the shining star that makes glorious the whole creation...  
What words of song shall we weave as a garland, to crown the holy bishop? He is the champion of true devotion

<sup>206</sup> [This fact (and the etymology of ξύλον) was pointed out to me by Andrew Louth.]

and the adversary of ungodliness, the fervent protector of the Faith, the great guide and teacher, the well-tuned harp of the Spirit, the golden tongue, the fountain that flows with waters of healing for the faithful, Gregory the great and marvellous. (Stichera, 314)

Although here Gregory probably is not explicitly imagined to bestow benefits for non-humans, it is interesting that so much natural imagery is employed. A little later the liturgy is slightly more explicit: 'Earth and sea acknowledge thee as their common teacher, as the holy pillar of Orthodoxy and the sacred armoury of divine dogmas, as a wise and saintly theologian, as the comrade and companion of the apostles' (O5, 322). The apostles themselves are also affirmed to 'have watered all the earth' 'with the rain of the Spirit' (Great Canon, O4, 389).

Similarly, John Climacus is presented as contributing to the flourishing of creation: 'with the rivers of thy tears thou hast made the barren desert fertile, and with the sights of sorrow from thy heart thou hast made thy labour to bear fruit a hundredfold' (Troparion, 355). Presumably this does not mean a literal blossoming of the desert but rather refers to the great following he attracted, yet almost exactly the same language is used of Mary of Egypt (who did not attract any such following, at least during her lifetime): 'With the streams of thy tears thou hast watered all the wilderness, and caused the fruits of repentance to spring up for us' (Aposticha, 449). Although this language is presumably metaphorical and not referring to real fruit or water, it is still significant that sainthood and fertility are associated. Fragrance is also attributed to Climacus: 'Through thine ascetic labours, O saint, thou hast become myrrh of sanctification, offered up as sweet-smelling fragrance to God' (O3, 358). John is even directly compared to plants: 'Thou art a fragrant meadow and a living paradise of the virtues, in which there grows the fruit of abstinence; and with it thou doest nourish all who honour thee... planted beside the waters of abstinence, O blessed father, thou art become a fruitful vine, bearing the grapes of true sanctity' (O4, 360).<sup>207</sup> Again, as the references to abstinence and sanctity indicate, the imagery is solely metaphorical, but it is nature-affirming metaphor nonetheless.

### 2.3 Paradise prays

Beyond these more metaphorical statements, there are already during Lent frequent references to creation's responding to the passion, beginning on Friday of the first week: 'When the creation saw the outrage of Thy Passion, O Lord, it was changed in every part, lamenting the murder...' (O5, 169). And it is not only the crucifixion to which the natural creation responds in this fashion: 'The Creator is struck on the face, and all creation quakes because of this outrage against Him. By His own consent He is smitten with a reed, and the heavens are shaken. The Judge is spat upon, and all the foundations of the earth are moved... God who has adorned the whole earth with flowers is crowned with thorns; He is scourged, and patiently He endures mockery and wears the scarlet robe of disgrace. All these things He who is God accepts and suffers in His flesh' (Holy Thursday, Compline, O5, 561). Even the Great Canon reiterates it vividly: 'The creation was in anguish, seeing Thee crucified. Mountains and rocks were split from fear, the earth quaked, and hell was despoiled; the light grew dark in daytime, beholding Thee, O Jesus, nailed in the flesh' (O9, 414). Presumably

here this reaction of creation is to exhort the penitent to greater repentance. Even on Holy Saturday creation joins in the lamentations with the Theotokos: ‘O hills and valleys, the multitude of men, and all creation, weep and lament with me, the Mother of our God’ (First Stasis, 631).<sup>208</sup> There are several such references throughout Lent and especially during Holy Week.<sup>209</sup>

It is interesting, however, that the holy martyr Theodore is also affirmed to have ‘become a strange and marvellous spectacle to the whole creation’ (First Saturday, O4, 287). In fact, already in Eden, nature responds to Adam’s departure: ‘The sun hid its rays, the moon and the stars were turned to blood, the mountains were afraid, the hills trembled, when Paradise was shut. Adam departed, beating his hands upon his face and saying: “I am fallen: merciful Lord, have mercy on me”’ (Forgiveness Sunday, Litya, 169). The Aposticha for this service go on to imagine Adam praying to paradise for intercession: ‘Adam was cast out of Paradise through eating from the tree. Seated before the gates he wept, lamenting with a pitiful voice and saying: “Woe is me, what have I suffered in my misery! I transgressed one commandment of the Master, and now I am deprived of every blessing. O most holy Paradise, planted for my sake and shut because of Eve, pray to Him that made thee and fashioned me, that once more I may take pleasure in thy flowers”’ (Forgiveness, Aposticha, 170). Adam explicitly addresses the flowers and trees of paradise to pray on his behalf: ‘O blessed meadow, trees and flowers planted by God, O sweetness of Paradise: let your leaves shed tears on my behalf, for I am naked and a stranger to God’s glory’ (Forgiveness, O4, 173). Thus, instead of humans interceding for the creation, here the plants pray on behalf of human beings. Paradise prays for humans and shares their sorrow: ‘O Paradise, share in the sorrow of thy master who is brought to poverty, and with the sound of thy leaves pray to the Creator that He may not keep thy gate closed for ever. I am fallen, in Thy compassion have mercy on me. O Paradise, perfect, all-holy and blessed, planted for Adam’s sake and shut because of Eve, pray to God for the fallen. I am fallen, in Thy compassion have mercy on me’ (Forgiveness Matins, Ikos, 175). At least in this instance, creation intercedes explicitly on behalf of sinful human beings.<sup>210</sup>

## 2.4 The Creator suffers and dies

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<sup>207</sup> John is also compared to a shepherd: ‘Thou hast led thy flock to pasture, O father, in the green meadows of the heavenly Kingdom, and with the rod of true dogma thou hast driven away the wild beasts of heresy’ (O7, 363).

<sup>208</sup> ‘When she received Thee in her bosom, O Creator and Saviour, the earth shook in fear, and with her quaking she awoke the dead’ (Second Stasis, 635). ‘The sun and moon grew dark together, O Saviour, like faithful servants clothed in black robes of mourning’ (Ibid., 636).

<sup>209</sup> There are three more mentions of this just in this one service. For more references see the chapter on Pascha.

<sup>210</sup> Andronikof, however, in his analysis of the Lenten and Paschal season, disapproves of these prayers. He finds them to be of a low theological level: ‘This is one of the very rare cases (and not one of the happiest) where, contrary to the liturgical and ontological sense of religion itself, a prayer is addressed not to a person but to a thing’ (1985:109). It is a little strange that Andronikof stresses the ‘cosmic dimension’ of the liturgy so strongly in his work and yet reduces plants to ‘things’ and finds (even symbolic) prayer addressed to them inappropriate and contrary to religion. In general, although he frequently refers to this ‘cosmic’ dimension (relying heavily on Bulgakov for doing so), ‘cosmic’ primarily seems to mean ‘all humans’ since he repeatedly rejects an individualistic approach but rarely refers to anything other than humans. He does talk about a ‘cohesion’ of all created things and occasionally refers to the whole universe, although it is not always clear that he is explicitly thinking of non-human creatures even in that context (30, 34, 67, 139, 226, 243, 316-18). In his most recent work on the sacraments, however, he does explicitly refer separately to ‘animated beings and the things of the universe’ as saved through the human microcosm (1998:11).

Repeatedly, God's act of creation is contrasted with his humility during the passion: 'He who made the lakes and springs and seas, wishing to teach us the surpassing value of humility, girded Himself with a towel and washed the feet of the disciples, humbling Himself in the abundance of His great compassion and raising us from the depths of wickedness, for He alone loves mankind' (Holy Thursday, O3, 550).<sup>211</sup> It is the 'Creator' who 'draws near to undergo the Cross' (Holy Monday, Sessional Hymn, 512). The liturgy repeatedly refers to this great paradox: 'Today He who hung the earth upon the waters is hung upon the Cross (3x). He who is King of the angels is arrayed in a crown of thorns. He who wraps the heaven in clouds is wrapped in the purple of mockery. He who in Jordan set Adam free receives blows upon His face. The Bridegroom of the Church is transfixed with nails. The Son of the Virgin is pierced with a spear. We venerate Thy Passion, O Christ (3x). Show us also Thy glorious Resurrection' (Holy Friday Matins, Antiphon Fifteen, 587; repeated at Ninth Hour, 609).<sup>212</sup> Holy Friday also refers to 'the Creator of all' who is led away 'as a malefactor' (Holy Friday, O9, 595). This contrast, of course, reaches its height at the crucifixion itself: 'A strange wonder it was to behold the Creator of heaven and earth hanging upon the Cross. The sun was darkened and the day was changed again to night, and the earth gave up the bodies of the dead from their tombs. With them we worship Thee: O save us' (Holy Friday, Ninth Hour, 608).<sup>213</sup> And the references to God's act of creating continue on Holy Saturday: 'He who at the beginning by His will alone set the earth upon its course, now descends dead beneath the earth. Tremble, O heaven, at this sight' (Second Stasis, 633).<sup>214</sup>

Since Christ is also the Creator, his suffering cleanses the world he has made from sin: 'I have desired to eat this Passover with you; for the Father has sent Me, His only-begotten Son, to cleanse the world from sin' (O4, 550). There is an interesting imagined dialogue between Mary and Christ at the cross that also speaks of the salvation of creation: 'Sun that never sets, O pre-eternal God and Creator of all things, how dost Thou endure suffering upon the Cross?' (O4, 618); "'How hast thou not seen the depth of My tender love?" said the Lord to the Pure Virgin. "Because I wish to save My creature, I have accepted to die. But I shall rise again and as God shall magnify thee in heaven and on earth". "I sing in praise of Thy compassion, loving Lord, and I worship the wealth of Thy mercy. For as God willingly Thou hast accepted to save Thy creation", said the all-pure Virgin. "But, O Saviour, by Thy Resurrection have mercy on us all"' (Holy Friday, Compline, O9, 621). The references to cleansing the 'world' and saving 'creation' are again somewhat ambivalent in these passages. It is possible that they might only refer to humans and not actually include non-

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<sup>211</sup> Also: 'The Wisdom of God that restrains the untamed fury of the waters that are above the firmament, that sets a bridle on the deep and keeps back the seas, now pours water into a basin; and the master washes the feet of His servants' (Holy Thursday, O5, 551).

<sup>212</sup> Similarly: 'In a robe of mockery ye clothe Him who ordered all things, who adorned the heavens with stars and the earth with wonders' (Holy Saturday Matins, Second Stasis, 637).

<sup>213</sup> 'O mighty wonder! The Creator of the world is delivered into the hands of lawless men, and He who loves mankind is raised upon the Cross, that He may free the prisoners in hell... Today the Master of Creation stands before Pilate; today the Maker of all things is given up to the Cross, and of His own will He is led as a lamb to the slaughter' (Holy Friday, Stichera, 612).

<sup>214</sup> 'Thou hast gone down beneath the earth, O Creator of light, and with Thee the sun's light has also set; creation is seized with trembling and proclaims Thee the Maker of all' (Holy Saturday Matins, Second Stasis, 635).

human creatures. Yet on Holy Saturday a reference to ‘all things’ seems more clearly inclusive: ‘Fairer in His beauty than all mortal men, He appears now as a corpse without form or comeliness, He who has made beautiful the nature of all things’ (First Stasis, 624). It is human sin and the power of evil that has been unleashed on the world, which has made things ‘ugly’ by defiling them. Christ thus provides purification and liberation for the whole cosmos: ‘Of old the lamb was sacrificed in secret; but Thou, longsuffering Saviour, wast sacrificed beneath the open sky and hast cleansed the whole creation’ (First Stasis, 627). In the Great Canon, ‘the creation’ and ‘all peoples’ are listed separately as being saved, thus implying that salvation extends beyond just people: ‘O Creator, Thou hast worked salvation in the midst of the earth, that we might be saved. Thou wast crucified of Thine own will upon the Tree; and Eden, closed till then, was opened. Things above and things below, the creation and all peoples have been saved and worship Thee’ (Great Canon, O3, 392). In general, the implications of Christ’s actions for all of creation are not a major theme in the Lenten texts. They are much more obviously stated at Pascha and in some of the other festal texts. And sin is indeed frequently described in very personal terms throughout the Lenten period, probably because of the strong call to repentance which pervades the texts so thoroughly. And yet some of the language of illness we have seen earlier implies that humans (and by implication all of creation) are also subject to powers beyond their control. It is from these powers that Christ seeks to purify and liberate his creation. The whole cosmos has been held in bondage to evil. It is this power on which Christ ‘tramples’ on Pascha. Creation thus is seen to be affected by human sin and by evil more generally, although the liturgy remains ambiguous about the extent to which non-human creation is complicit in human sin.

## 2.5 Creation suffers effects of human sin

There is a final important issue that is not treated in the liturgical texts as such, but is closely connected to its themes of sin and repentance nonetheless. The Hebrew Scriptures frequently recognise that human sin affects not just humans, but also other animals and the ground. This is a particularly clear theme in some of the minor prophets, like Joel, Hosea, and Amos.<sup>215</sup> Devastation of the ground, including drought or floods which destroy harvests and often lead to great misery and starvation, are closely connected to human sin. On a basic level, such disasters are interpreted as punishment for human sin. Yet on a deeper level there is a recognition that human sin, especially in terms of exploitation and greed, does indeed affect the land and has serious consequences for the earth.<sup>216</sup> It is interesting that several Patristic homilies establish similar

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<sup>215</sup> Much work has been done in recent biblical scholarship to show these relationships and highlight their great ecological potential (Habel & Trudinger, 2008, especially on Hosea, Joel, and Amos; Dempsey & Pazdan, 2004; Habel, 2000a, 2000b, 2001; Anderson, 1992; Murray, 1992; Altner, 1989).

<sup>216</sup> This actually does appear within in the liturgy in the aforementioned liturgical commemorations of earthquakes where ‘certain verses in the final ode of the canon, make the earth speak, who, for example, proclaims its innocence in the face of human sin; the earth is in the hands of God who in his power guards it; it is also punished although it has not committed any fault, since humans defile it by their sin; finally, it complains of human sins. God thus uses the earth as an instrument here in order to warn humans; it is the earth, here personified, who expresses itself by means of the earthquake in order to call humans to repent. The Creator uses the entire creation, and in the case of earthquakes, the earth, in order to incite humans to a renunciation of sin, and in order to guide them to repentance, to salvation and to the realisation of their vocation. In the context of the commemoration of an earthquake, this vocation of the human being can

connections in the face of natural disasters. Although this is not a theme in the liturgical texts for Lent as such, these homilies exhort to repentance and metanoia in language that is very close to the Lenten spirit.

Gregory Nazianzen after a terrible storm that has destroyed the crops on the verge of harvest depicts the devastated ground in sensitive imagery.<sup>217</sup> Although he is primarily expressing his empathy with the farmers who have lost their crops and the consequent possibility of hunger for many people, his careful description of the land is still striking:

Terrible is an unfruitful season, and the loss of the crops. It could not be otherwise, when men are already rejoicing in their hopes, and counting on their all but harvested stores. Terrible again is an unseasonable harvest, when the farmers labour with heavy hearts, sitting as it were beside the grave of their crops, which the gentle rain nourished, but the wild storm has rooted up, whereof the mower filleth not his hand, neither he that bindeth up the sheaves in his bosom, nor have they obtained the blessing which passers-by bestow upon the farmers. Wretched indeed is the sight of the ground devastated, cleared and shorn of its ornaments, over which the blessed Joel wails in his most tragic picture of the desolation of the land, and the scourge of famine; while another prophet wails, as he contrasts with its former beauty its final disorder, and thus discourses on the anger of the Lord when He smites the land: before him is the garden of Eden, behind him a desolate wilderness. (16.6, NPNF:249)

Cyril of Alexandria also makes heavy use of Joel in trying to explain a natural disaster in Egypt which has led to starvation. The evil that people have done pollutes the earth and angers God. This is why there is fire and famine (VII.2, SC392:43). Interestingly enough, in another letter (also drawing heavily on Joel) he describes the earth as a mother and condemns violence against her as a kind of murder, joining it with the violence against people which he also condemns in the strongest terms (VIII.3, SC392:81). If they repent, God will hear them and the earth will bear fruit again (VIII.4, SC392:89).

Gregory also suggests that famine and storm are God's punishment and like Cyril calls his father's congregation to repentance. He wonders about this in imagery that includes the suffering of the earth:

Why have the crops withered, our storehouses been emptied, the pastures of our flocks failed, the fruits of the earth been withheld, and the plains have been filled with shame instead of fatness: why have valleys lamented and not abounded in corn, the mountains not dropped sweetness, as they shall do hereafter to the righteous, but been stripped and dishonoured, and received on the contrary the cruse of Gilboa? The whole earth has become as it was in the beginning, before it was adorned with its beauties. Thou visitedst the earth, and madest it to drink—but the visitation has been for evil, and the draught destructive. Alas! what a spectacle! Our prolific crops reduced to stubble, the seed we sowed is recognised by scanty remains, and our harvest, the approach of which we reckon from the number of the months, instead of from the ripening corn, scarcely bears the firstfruits for the Lord. (16.17, NPNF:253)

Gregory then goes on to outline why this devastation has happened. He has already drawn heavily on Joel throughout his homily and uses this biblical text together with other prophetic themes again to denounce the exploitation of the poor and suffering: 'One of us has oppressed the poor, and wrested from him his portion of land, and wrongly encroached upon his landmark by fraud or violence, and joined house to house, and field to field, to rob his neighbour of something, and been eager to have no neighbour, so as to dwell alone on the earth'. Like the prophets Gregory is clear that these kinds of actions pollute the land:

Another has defiled the land with usury and interest, both gathering where he had not sowed and reaping where he had not strawed, farming, not the land, but the necessity of the needy. Another has robbed God, the giver of all, of the firstfruits of the barnfloor and winepress, showing himself at once thankless and senseless, in neither giving

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be defined as salvation, action of grace and praise of its Creation: humans recognise their Creator as all-powerful over all things, and in particular over the earth' (André Lossky in Triacca & Pistoia, 1998:150-51).

<sup>217</sup> For the ecological context of the Cappadocians, see Bergmann (2005) who attempts to develop an ecological liberation theology through a close analysis of Gregory Nazianzen's theology (especially his pneumatology).



thanks for what he has had, nor prudently providing, at least, for the future. Another has had no pity on the widow and orphan, and not imparted his bread and meagre nourishment to the needy, or rather to Christ, Who is nourished in the person of those who are nourished even in a slight degree; a man perhaps of much property unexpectedly gained, for this is the most unjust of all, who finds his many barns too narrow for him, filling some and emptying others, to build greater ones for future crops. (16.18, NPNF:253)

And he concludes: 'For because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Because of these things the heaven is shut, or opened for our punishment; and much more, if we do not repent, even when smitten, and draw near to Him, Who approaches us through the powers of nature' (ibid.). Gregory thus condemns oppression of the poor in the strongest terms and sees the natural disaster as a direct result of such injustice. Although he is addressing the suffering people in his parish, people and land are seen to be in a symbiotic relationship.

In a similar devastation, this time not because of too much rain but because of too little, Basil depicts the land ravaged by famine in language as compassionately descriptive as that of Gregory:

We see the sky, brothers, shut up, naked, and cloudless, this clarity so pure it causes gloom and grief, although in the past we desired it, when clouds overshadowed us in sunless gloom. Now the fields are little more than withered clods, unpleasant, sterile, and unfruitful, cracked and pierced to the depths by the hot sun. The rich and flowing streams have fled away and the torrential paths of the great rivers are exhausted. Little children walk in them, and women cross them, laden with bundles. Many of our wells have dried up and we lack the basic necessities of life... I was looking at the fields, and at the many people weeping over their fruitlessness, and I too poured out lamentation because no showers were pouring out upon us. The sown seed was parched in the ploughed furrows. What was peeping out and sprouting was miserably withered by the heat. (184)<sup>218</sup>

And like Gregory, Basil blames the disaster on human behaviour: 'Look, now, at how the multitude of our sins has caused unnatural seasons, and traded the proper forms for strange combinations indeed. The winter was dry with no moisture. The spring gave us the other extreme—the heat, I mean—but again without rain. Feverish heat and icy cold, unforeseen, exceeded the boundaries of creation and conspired with evil to do us damage, to drive people from life and livelihood' (185). In what does this sin consist? It is for Basil as for Gregory connected to mistreating the poor and ignoring those who need our help:

However, our uncontrolled and culpable behaviour is obvious: seizing on behalf of others, we do not share; we commend good works yet withhold them from those who are without. We are freed slaves, yet we do not have pity on our fellow slaves. We are nourished when hungry, yet we rush by the one in need. In want of nothing, having God as our treasurer and the one who defrays the costs, we become skinflints and asocial in relation to the poor. Our sheep multiply, yet the naked outnumber them. The storehouses are crowded with narrow corridors with abundant reserves, yet we have no mercy on those who mourn. For this cause the righteous tribunal threatens us. For this cause also, God will not open his hand, because we ourselves shut out brotherly love. For this cause, the farmlands are dry: because love has fled. (185)

Basil exhorts them to repentance and complains about the fact that their repentance is so weak and half-hearted (187). And he is quite confident that more righteous behaviour will allow the earth to become fruitful again: 'Who nourishes the fatherless child so that God might nurture for us the orphaned grain that is oppressed by the impotence of the winds? Who provides for a widow who is distressed by life's difficulties, so that the necessary food might be distributed? Destroy the unjust account books, that sin might be dissolved. Wipe out the oppressive contract of usury that earth might bear appropriately. For when copper, gold, and inert substances multiply contrary to nature, then that which is naturally fecund becomes barren, condemned

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<sup>218</sup> I am using the translation of Basil's homily in Holman (2001:183-192).

to fruitlessness, as vengeance on the established practices' (187). By sharing their wealth instead of hoarding it, they will 'persuade the earth to bear fruit' (187).

Ephrem the Syrian, with his great sensitivity to creation, makes the most explicit connection between human sin and its effects on the ground: 'Because Jezebel defrauded Truth, the earth refused its produce,/the womb of the earth held back, as a reproof, the seeds that the farmer had lent it,/the earth suffocated the seeds within itself, because its inhabitants had deceitfully held back truth./The earth, whose nature is to bear, became barren against her custom,/while the cruse and the horn gave birth and bore fruit against their nature./The same prophet's voice that had deprived the earth also caused barren wombs to be fruitful' (7.3; 1983:47-48). Commenting on this text, Brock contends that 'in modern terms one could say that for Ephrem the physical and spiritual ecospheres are intimately linked: because of the interconnectedness of everything, the abuse of nature, resulting from the human misuse of free will, will have consequences in all sorts of unexpected places' (1992:167). And there is actually one hint of such a connection between human sin and the pollution of the land in the liturgy. On the Sunday of the Prodigal Son the following statement is the first sticheron for the psalm 'Lord I call': 'I was entrusted with a sinless and living land (Εἰς ἀναμάρτητον χώραν, καὶ ζωηρὰν ἐπιστεύθην), but I sowed the ground (γεωσπορήσας) with sin and reaped with a sickle the ears of slothfulness; in thick sheaves I garnered my actions, but winnowed them not on the threshing floor of repentance. But I beg Thee, my God, the pre-eternal husbandman (γεωργόν), with the wind of Thy loving-kindness winnow the chaff of my works, and grant to my soul the corn of forgiveness; shut me in Thy heavenly storehouses and save me' (112). The agricultural images here are striking. The land is described as 'sinless' but it becomes 'sown' with sin which produces mixed actions.<sup>219</sup> God is described as the one who works the ground.<sup>220</sup> Although the speaker then quickly moves to focus on the weighing of his or her actions, it is at least implied that sinful actions affect the ground even if the recognition remains at a more metaphorical level. Again, human responsibility for sin and a larger contamination by evil are held together in ambivalent tension.

### 3. Ecological Implications

The liturgy of Lent, then, as much in its actions as in its texts recognises the weight of human sin and calls us to repentance. It speaks of this sin in heavily symbolic and metaphorical language with frequent

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<sup>219</sup> It is also said occasionally that 'corruption' dwells in the earth, presumably because of sin and not inherently, although that is not clarified here (Climacus, O9, 366). On the other hand, what is one to make of the following: 'O Lord, Thou hast made Thy holy disciples into living heavens. At their intercessions deliver me from the evils of the earth' (Fifth Wednesday, Stichera, 371). A similarly ambivalent statement follows only shortly later: 'I have become a stumbling-block to men; born of the earth, I have cultivated earthly things.... O Thou who hast formed me from the earth, despise not Thy creature; but before I perish utterly, save me, O Lord' (Ibid., 372). One would think that being 'born of the earth' and formed by God 'from the earth' should be positive, yet the context clearly interprets them negatively, even suggesting that God might despise the creature for being 'earthly'. Conversely, on Holy Saturday Christ himself is compared to a seed placed in the ground to die and bear fruit: 'The life-giving Seed, twofold in nature, today is sown with tears in the furrows of the earth; but springing up He will bring joy to the world' (Second Stasis, 634).

<sup>220</sup> God is called a 'husbandman' (γεωργός) also in some other texts. For example in ode three on the Sunday of the Prodigal Son: 'O God, the husbandman of all good trees and fruit, make fruitful my barren mind in Thy compassion' (116). This is reiterated literally during Compline on Holy Tuesday (O3, 530).

reference to Adam. Yet there is at least a latent recognition (more strongly explored in some homilies) that human sin affects the cosmos and is not merely an isolated affair. Traditionally, this larger effect of sin on the world has been put in terms of original or Adamic sin. Yet many contemporary theologians acknowledge that a historical interpretation of Adam or the origin of sin is difficult to maintain in the face of what we know about human origins and that of the universe.

### 3.1 Historical fall and original sin

The symbolic use of Adam must be kept firmly in mind when speaking of the origin of sin or the fall (or especially 'original sin'). Although many Eastern writers (both ancient and contemporary) affirm that the story of the fall is not to be taken literally, their subsequent exposition generally treats the fall in a historical fashion. For example, Alfeyev claims that the story of the fall is not to be taken literally but rather 'prefigures the entire tragic history of the human race. It shows who we were and what we have become' (2002:67).<sup>221</sup> Yet, he continues by speaking of explicit consequences of the fall in the past tense (which therefore presumably must be an event that has actually taken place):

The consequences of the Fall were catastrophic for the first human beings. Not only were they deprived of the bliss and sweetness of Paradise, but their whole nature was changed and disfigured. They fell away from their natural condition and entered an unnatural state of being. All elements of their spiritual and corporeal make-up were damaged: their spirit, instead of striving for God, became engrossed in the passions; their soul entered the sphere of bodily instincts, while their body lost its original lightness and was transformed into heavy sinful flesh. (69)

He argues that this event had real effects also on nature and the cosmos:

Not only humanity but also the entire world changed as a result of the Fall. The original harmony between people and nature had been broken; the elements had become hostile: storms, earthquakes and floods could destroy life. The earth would no longer provide everything of its own accord; it would have to be tilled 'in the sweat of your face', and would produce 'thorns and thistles'. Even the animals would become enemies of human beings: Adam was told that the serpent would 'bruise his heel' and other predators would attack him. All creation would be subject to the 'bondage of decay'. Together with humanity it would now 'wait for freedom' from this bondage, since it did not submit to sin voluntarily but through the fault of mankind. (80)

While here sin has a cosmic dimension that is surely useful for ecological theology, linking it so closely to a rather literal interpretation of the fall is problematic. The 'entire world' cannot have 'changed as a result of the Fall' in the way in which Alfeyev describes here, as storms and earthquakes as much as thorns and thistles were around for millions of years before there were any human beings who could possibly have brought their emergence about through some transgression. It is also not clear how human sin exactly has the power to cause all these things to happen. Other writers similarly fluctuate between denying historicity to Adam and yet assuming clear historical and cosmic consequences from the fall.<sup>222</sup> If predation and natural disasters are

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<sup>221</sup> He goes on to develop an almost Augustinian conception of original sin: 'Sin became so deeply rooted in human nature that not a single descendant of Adam has been spared from a hereditary predisposition to it' (2002:71).

<sup>222</sup> Thus Bulgakov calls it a myth that is not 'empty legend' but a 'hieroglyph of truth' (2008b:170). He insists several times that Adam is an image for all of humankind, but then goes on to posit a fundamental ontological change in all of creation as a result of the fall (2008b:180-189). Sherrard, conversely, speaks of the fall as 'an event not of the past but one in which we are involved at every moment of our lives' (1998:223). Argenti also contends that the fall story is not to be taken literally: 'Rather than being a historical account, the Genesis narrative describes profound insights into the human condition, in a form that is as accessible to the child as it is to the scholar... Whether the fall is an all-embracing metaphor for all the sins ever committed by all human beings, or a tragic metahistoric reality that lies beyond historical

meant to be linked with human sin in a metaphorical instead of any historical sense, this needs to be made much clearer.

As we have already seen it is impossible to make a historical human being responsible for the entry of death into the universe.<sup>223</sup> Humans can only emerge because of a long history of symbiosis between life and death. Humans can only live because of the death of other creatures (as other creatures also profit from human death). Here the liturgical treatment of Adam can prove helpful. The liturgy does not employ Adam as an explanation for the origin of sin.<sup>224</sup> It is not interested in a history of origins. Sin and evil are realities with which we must cope and the liturgical texts and actions help us do so. They speak from *within* a condition of fallenness and weakness, a condition that knows itself both personally responsible and overpowered by a larger force that it often finds itself helpless to combat. And this force is both external and internal. All these realities are expressed and addressed within the liturgical texts while not attempting to solve the whence and where of sin and evil. And in fact, as noted above, the reference to Adam is generally employed in the first person. The liturgy describes the experience of Adam and the fall as *my* experience. This stress on the present is strengthened by the fact that the use of Adam is already interpreted theologically.<sup>225</sup> It is not a simple description of a historical instance but a theological reflection that simultaneously carries with it eschatological references. The ‘original’ Adam (whatever that might mean), the future Adam (who re-enters

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time (and I think the latter is closer to patristic tradition), both interpretations describe man as having succumbed to the temptation of taking the place of God, and granting himself the radical autonomy of absolute being. But sin dehumanises man and plunges him into misery. In cutting himself off from God, he denies himself his very humanity’ (2006:34, 38). Yet he also thinks of the fall as having explicit implications for the rest of creation: ‘Indeed, the whole of creation was dragged into the disorder of the fall’ (97). He stresses that sin has cosmic consequences: ‘Yes, the fall is a *cosmic* event, and what we now call ‘natural disasters’ are part and parcel of a fallen world which has turned towards perdition. Let us not blame God for natural disasters and innocent suffering, for they are part of the “mystery of iniquity” into which the whole of creation has been drawn: angels, men, beasts, and the earth itself” (97). Again it is unclear how humans ‘dragged’ the entire cosmos into disaster if the fall is not historical. How exactly can the fall function as ‘an all-embracing metaphor’ for human sin and its effect on the larger creation without positing it as an ultimate *origin* of evil?’<sup>223</sup> Primavesi makes this very clear: ‘Present knowledge of coevolutionary process before and throughout human history makes it impossible to isolate one individual, Adam, out of that process and attribute to him the pivotal role in that history... to continue to believe this account requires belief in “Adam” as an individual who brought death into the world. But this is a denial of contemporary understanding of life processes emergent in every living organism since life began on earth’ (2000:38). See also McDaniel who tries to interpret the fall in an ecological fashion (1995:108-109 and 123-125).

<sup>224</sup> See also Behr’s useful treatment of Adam and the fall (2006:77-111). Although he does not speak explicitly of the liturgy, he shows that the link between the fall and physical death is far more complicated in the Patristic writings than commonly supposed. For a summary of patristic thinking about creation and fall see Bouteneff (2008).

<sup>225</sup> This is also very obvious in the Great Canon: ‘I looked upon the beauty of the tree and my mind was deceived; and now I lie naked and ashamed. All the ruling passions have ploughed upon my back, making long furrows of wickedness. I have lost the beauty and glory with which I was first created; and now I lie naked and ashamed. Sin has stripped me of the robe that God once wove for me, and it has sewed for me garments of skin. I am clothed with the raiment of shame as with fig leaves, in condemnation of my self-willed passions. I am clad in a garment that is defiled and shamefully blood-stained by a life of passion and self-indulgence. I have stained the garment of my flesh, O Saviour, and defiled that which was made in Thine image and likeness. I have fallen beneath the painful burden of the passions and the corruption of material things; and I am hard pressed by the enemy.... With my lustful desires I have formed within myself the deformity of the passions and disfigured the beauty of my mind. I have discoloured with the passions the first beauty of the image, O Saviour. But seek me, as once Thou hast sought the lost coin, and find me’ (O2, 382).

Paradise because of the work of the second Adam, Christ<sup>226</sup>), and the ‘present’ Adam (the person who speaks the liturgical text in the first person) are all deliberately conflated with each other.<sup>227</sup> ‘In my wretchedness I have cast off the robe woven by God, disobeying Thy divine command, O Lord, at the counsel of the enemy; and I am clothed now in fig leaves and in garments of skin. I am condemned to eat the bread of toil in the sweat of my brow, and the earth has been cursed so that it bears thorns and thistles for me. But, Lord, who in the last times wast made flesh of a Virgin, call me back again and bring me into Paradise’. And again paradise is asked to pray on our behalf: ‘O precious Paradise, unsurpassed in beauty, tabernacle built by God, unending gladness and delight, glory of the righteous, joy of the prophets, and dwelling of the saints, with the sound of thy leaves pray to the Maker of all: may He open unto me the gates which I closed by my transgression, and may He count me worthy to partake of the Tree of Life and of the joy which was mine when I dwelt there before’ (Forgiveness Sunday, Stichera, 169). This is clearly not merely a reference to the person of Adam who may have lived at some time long ago. Repeatedly, the person today identifies closely with the experience of the fall: ‘Come, my wretched soul, and weep today over thine acts, remembering how once thou wast stripped naked in Eden and cast out from delight and unending joy’ (Forgiveness Matins, O1, 171). In some examples the identification is made rather vividly by first describing a part of the original story and then moving to a present tense application of it: ‘Long ago the crafty serpent envied my honour and whispered deceit in Eve’s ear. By her I was led astray and banished—woe is me!—from the dance of life. Rashly I stretched out my hand and tasted from the tree of knowledge, though God had ordered me on no account to eat from it; and I was bitterly cast out from the divine glory’ (Forgiveness Matins, O3, 172).<sup>228</sup> Sometimes the two are separated more fully, but even then the story of Adam is read primarily in order to draw implications for our action today: ‘Adam was cast out from the delight of Paradise: bitter was his eating, when in uncontrolled desire he broke the commandment of the Master, and he was condemned to work the earth from which he had himself been taken, and to eat his bread in toil and sweat. Therefore let us love abstinence, that we may not weep as he did outside Paradise, but may enter through the gate’ (Forgiveness Matins, Sessional Hymn, 172).<sup>229</sup> Adam, then, is primarily read as a figure that expresses *our* sin and the condition of *our* fallenness. Adam speaks both

<sup>226</sup> Christ’s assumption and restoration of Adam is a very frequent theme in all the liturgies. It is mentioned even in the feast of the transfiguration: ‘Thou hast put Adam on entire, O Christ, and changing the nature grown dark in past times, Thou hast filled it with glory and made it godlike by the alteration of Thy form’ (O3, 483).

<sup>227</sup> This treatment of biblical figures is characteristic of liturgical texts in general and is not limited to the figure of Adam. Our stricter contemporary distinctions between literal and symbolic, historical and present probably would have made little sense to the original audiences. The difficulties with the identity of Adam are in many ways contemporary problems and the reading given here addresses these contemporary issues not any that might have posed themselves to earlier centuries.

<sup>228</sup> Possibly Adam is imagined to be speaking here (though that is not clear from the context), but in either case it is sung (or chanted) by us in the present as a prayer.

<sup>229</sup> Sometimes Adam is contrasted with a more positive figure and we are exhorted not to follow his example but that of the positive illustration (in this case that of Moses): ‘Adam was driven out of Paradise, because in disobedience he had eaten food; but Moses was granted the vision of God, because he had cleansed the eyes of his soul by fasting. If then we long to dwell in Paradise, let us abstain from all needless food; and if we desire to see God, let us like Moses fast for forty days. With sincerity let us persevere in prayer and intercession; let us still the passions of our soul; let us subdue the rebellious instinct of the flesh. With light step let us set out upon the path to heaven, where the choirs of angels with never-silent voice sing the praises of the undivided Trinity; and there we shall behold the surpassing beauty of the Master’ (Forgiveness Matins, Stichera at Praises, 179).

of our transgressions, of our evil acts for which we are responsible and must repent, and of our implication in a whole history of evil, which both precedes and follows us and of which we are a part not by our own choosing. Adam speaks both of our need for repentance and our need for healing.

And such a vision of sin is indeed useful in ecological discussions.<sup>230</sup> In many ways our current situation in what we call the ecological crisis displays a similar ambivalence. What makes such issues as climate change, waste, pollution, or the depletion of resources especially difficult is precisely that none of them can be neatly traced to personal responsibility for specific transgressions, although these obviously play a role. We are indeed personally responsible in many ways for pollution and exploitation through our lifestyle and many individual actions. For these we must repent and must change the way we live, trying to avoid (or at the very least seriously reduce) such actions in the future. Yet the situation is also much larger than our individual actions. We are implicated in a whole network of commitments and choices that are systemic rather than personal. That does not relieve us of responsibility, but it also goes far beyond any personal culpability or indeed ability to 'fix' the situation. Ecological evil is inscribed into the very structures of our lives in the industrialised world and a constant byproduct of the consumer culture in which we live. These also require repentance and change, but on a much larger order than that of a personal transgression. The liturgy does not neatly distinguish between personal acts of sin and a larger sense of fallenness and even oppression by evil forces. This is particular helpful in a situation where all three of those connotations are clearly present and often overwhelm people who are used to think of sin as personal acts, which affect at most one or two other persons and can be easily fixed by confession and restitution. Ecological sin and evil is much more pervasive than such personal acts and much more extensive in its implications for others. Personal sin and guilt are becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish from more general systemic evil. The ecological crisis probably more than any other experience in recent history speaks of participation in a wider evil that cannot be separated from personal trespass and yet is not merely personal. Do we carry personal guilt for Western modes of consumption?<sup>231</sup> Yes and no. If one calculates one's ecological footprint, one realises very quickly that even the most modest Western lifestyle still consumes resources at an utterly disproportionate rate.<sup>232</sup> In many ways we are trapped by the systems of distribution and consumption of our culture. Every purchase in a store, every cent saved for retirement, every mile driven is already implicated in the system that pollutes and discriminates against others.

And yet certainly this does not absolve us from responsibility. The fact that I use up the resources equivalent to four or more planets means that a great many people are paying for my consumption through hunger and starvation. We are indeed culpable for our Western lifestyle and clearly prolong it through our

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<sup>230</sup> I am here re-using some ideas I have developed in regard to Ricoeur's use of the Adamic myth (2010b).

<sup>231</sup> Loy interprets the economics of capitalism as a new religious creed (in Coward & Maguire, 2000:15-29). Some writers speak of consumerism as an 'alternative liturgy'.

<sup>232</sup> It is often pointed out by the ecological literature that the rich of the Western nations constitute about 10% of the world's population but consume about 90% of its resources.

participation within it and yet we cannot actually extricate ourselves from it entirely or even very much.<sup>233</sup> Therefore, the defilement of the ground, the water, and the air does point to sinful action and even guilt, although that guilt cannot be clearly and solely assigned to independent actors.<sup>234</sup> We find ourselves already inextricably linked within a situation not entirely of our own making. We are both victims and culprits, evil is already present as a reality and yet we are also responsible for it and it is incumbent upon us to remedy it. This reality is supremely expressed by the Adamic myth.<sup>235</sup> The liturgical use of Adam, although it obviously does not itself address such issues, can help us identify with and appropriate its reality for our own lives on both personal and communal levels.

### 3.2 Link between sin and pollution

It is striking in this context that the liturgical texts actually use the language of pollution quite heavily. Although the contemporary devastation and soiling of the ground, the waters, the air, the oceans and the atmosphere is a fairly recent phenomenon (at least in terms of magnitude),<sup>236</sup> the ancient texts frequently speak of corruption and defilement. Christ is repeatedly said to take on mortal flesh in order to ‘renew the whole of my corrupted nature’ (Publican, O9, 110). Sin is seen as polluting and as causing filth. The saint is affirmed to be ‘a river of abstinence, not polluted with sin, but washing clean the thoughts and purging away the filth (ρύπον ἐκκαθαίρων) of those’ praying to him (Climacus, O7, 364). The Stichera in the fifth week (preceding the Great Canon) use such language repeatedly: ‘Wash me clean from the filth (τοῦ ῥύπου) of my actions’ (374); ‘Cleanse the filth (Ρύπον) from my soul, O Thou who for my sake wast made poor and hast become a young child according to the flesh. I am weak and broken, O Christ: send down upon me a drop of Thy mercy; wash the dirt (τοῦ ῥύπου) away and heal me from my sickness’ (375). The Great Canon confesses offering ‘defiled actions and a polluted sacrifice and a worthless life (πράξεις ῥυπαράς, καὶ θυσίαν ψεκτὴν, καὶ ἄχρηστον βίον)’ (O1, 379). Like David ‘I am covered with filth (βεβορβόρωμαι)’ (O2, 382). Both mind and flesh suffer such pollution: ‘Dost thou not tremble, then, my soul, for thou hast defiled thy flesh and polluted thy mind (ῥυπωθεῖσα τὴν σάρκα καὶ τὸν νοῦν κατασπιλώσασα)?’ (O2, 384).<sup>237</sup> At times this pollution is imagined less in terms of personal transgression and more as a kind of illness: ‘I have

<sup>233</sup> At the same time, and more positively, the environmental crises also point to the interconnectedness of all humankind and the larger connection to all of life and to the cosmos itself. The relatively recent Western emphasis on the individual as the lone subject in charge of its objects and disconnected from anything and anyone else is no longer tenable (if it ever was). There is no such thing as an independent subject in complete control of its own life and destiny. Personal trespass (or sin) can no longer be regarded as separate from a larger web of guilt and defilement.

<sup>234</sup> Garvey points to the challenges of this insight for formulating what might constitute moral action in regard to global warming. Our traditional moral codes are not neatly and easily applicable to the evils of climate change, as notions of responsibility and justice become much more complex in this case (2008:57-87).

<sup>235</sup> Birch says: ‘The fall of humanity is not just an event in the long-distant past. It occurs at every moment when our actual life falls short of the creative possibilities for that moment. It occurs when we fail to respect and show reverence to the non-human creation. It has always been this way’ (1997:81).

<sup>236</sup> See McNeill’s careful analysis of this (2000). He argues in several hundred pages (packed with data) that it is precisely the magnitude of our pollution that makes it something ‘new’.

<sup>237</sup> Here clearly soul, mind, and body can equally be affected by sin: ‘Ah, how I have emulated Lamech, the murderer of old, slaying my soul as if it were a man, and my mind as if it were a young man. With sensual longings I have killed my body, as Cain the murderer killed his brother’ (O2, 384).

defiled my body, I have stained my spirit, and I am all covered with wounds: but as physician, O Christ, heal both body and spirit for me through repentance. Wash, purify and cleanse me, O my Saviour, and make me whiter than snow' (O3, 392). 'Woe is me! I have defiled my mind with filth. I pray to Thee, O Master: wash me clean in the waters of my tears and make the garment of my flesh white as snow' (O5, 395). Mary of Egypt is polluted by her 'past sins' (Stichera, 447). Similar language is used of Judas: 'But the ungrateful disciple, though he breathed Thy grace, rejected it and defiled himself in filth (βορβόρῳ συμφύρεται), selling Thee from love of money' (Holy Wednesday, Sessional Hymn, 535).

In almost all of these instances filth or pollution are applied only to the individual. My personal sin pollutes me. In only one instance is similar language applied to land. The liturgy draws a (very brief) contrast between the sinful land of Haran and the land promised to Abraham 'which flows with incorruption and eternal life' (O3, 386). Maybe some of this language could be expanded to take account of the pollution around us. We are increasingly recognising that our filth pollutes the land, the air, and the waters. This pollution requires repentance as much as the personal pollution of which the liturgies speak.<sup>238</sup> Defilement is indeed an eminently appropriate description for the current state of our planet. Our world (and especially our atmosphere) is defiled, polluted, corrupted. Weather patterns are changing, storms are becoming increasingly violent, glaciers and ice sheets are melting, habitats are being destroyed and species are going extinct at an alarmingly accelerating pace. Our rivers, lakes, and aquifers are seriously polluted or running dry altogether. A recent study pointed to the high toxicity of the umbilical cords nourishing unborn infants—babies are quite literally born 'stained' and 'corrupted'.<sup>239</sup> Something similar happens on a daily basis when chemicals enter the food chain on even some very basic level—their poisons travel and accumulate. Surely, defilement is not too strong a term for these and other evils. And this defilement affects us even when we do not carry personal culpability, as in the unborn infant exposed to the toxins linking it to the mother's body or in the droughts and storms that ravage areas in developing nations with minimal carbon footprint. In either case, both when we participate actively and when we are only passively affected, such defilement is sinful and evil and requires redemption and cleansing. This the liturgies clearly recognise, even when they apply the language to more personal sins. Maybe they can help us to acknowledge other kinds of pollution and defilement also as sinful?<sup>240</sup>

<sup>238</sup> The Greek term ῥύπος often employed designates 'dirt, filth, dirtiness, uncleanness'; ῥυπόω is to 'make foul and filthy, to befoul' (Lidell & Scott, 1969:1432). βόρβορος is 'slime, mud, mire' (296). Both seem appropriate terms to apply to environmental pollution and defilement.

<sup>239</sup> The study found 287 (mostly toxic) chemicals in umbilical cords. See: 'Environmental Working Group analysis of tests of 10 umbilical cord blood samples' conducted by AXYS Analytical Services (Sydney, BC) and Flett Research Ltd. (Winnipeg, MB).

<sup>240</sup> In fact, not only the liturgical but the larger theological tradition is ambiguous about the extent to which human sin affects the rest of creation. On the one hand, it is affirmed that only humans have sinned and that creation remains innocent and does not require redemption. On the other hand, often the earth or even the larger cosmos are seen to be under the power of evil in some way and thus they must be cleansed and liberated from this 'curse' or 'occupation'. This ambivalence will be addressed more fully in the next chapter, as it is a prominent theme in the liturgy of Theophany.



Bartholomew, in fact, explicitly and repeatedly calls pollution and environmental destruction sin (2011:353; 2012:227).<sup>241</sup> He is very clear in identifying specific ecological sins, especially in regard to pollution of the Black Sea but also in other respects (2003:243). Harm wrought upon creation “*even out of negligence, constitutes not simply an evil, but a grave sin*” (ibid., emphasis his). Even more strongly, he claims that ‘each human act that contributes to the destruction of the natural environment must be regarded as *a very serious sin*’ (emphasis mine). He suggests that ecological evils have their root in a ‘destruction of religious piety within the human heart’ (2003:244). Bartholomew stresses not only that environmental destruction is a sin, but also that its protection is a religious obligation for all three of the Abrahamic traditions: ‘the Christian religion, the Jewish religion, and the Muslim religion... are obliged to emphasize to their faithful that *tending the earth and, in general, the worldly environment that we inhabit is a commandment of God. As such, it is a religious obligation*’ (123; emphasis his). In an encyclical message for the Nativity, he is even more explicit, calling acts ‘toward the natural creation’ *mortal sins* and ‘an unforgivable insult to the uncreated God’.<sup>242</sup> Ecological devastation thus is ‘a grave sin’, ‘a very serious sin’, ‘a mortal sin’, an ‘unforgivable insult’ against God—this is strong language indeed. And while it is put in ethical terms, it also makes a theological statement. In fact, in several contexts Bartholomew goes even further by linking the human tendency to exploitation, which leads to ecological destruction, to the fall or calling it ‘original sin’: Due to the fall, ‘instead of a thankful user, the human person became a greedy abuser. Humanity sought to take from creation what it could not satisfy, namely the blessedness that was missing’ (284).<sup>243</sup> In a common declaration with John Paul II, he says: ‘At the beginning of history, man and woman sinned by disobeying God and rejecting His design for creation. Among the results of this first sin was the destruction of the original harmony of creation. If we examine carefully the social and environmental crisis the world community is facing, we must conclude that we are still betraying the mandate God has given us: to be stewards called to collaborate with God in watching over creation in holiness and wisdom’ (309). Ecological devastation is sinful and to be condemned.<sup>244</sup> Other Orthodox authors agree. Harakas provides a

<sup>241</sup> See my article on Bartholomew (2010a), some of which is reused in the following paragraph.

<sup>242</sup> ‘While the plenitude of theological vision in Jesus Christ allows the highest doxological offering of the universe to the Almighty, the thoughtless and abusive treatment of even the smallest material and living creation of God must be considered a mortal sin. An insult toward the natural creation is seen as – and in fact actually is – an unforgivable insult to the uncreated God’ (2003:130).

<sup>243</sup> For example, the 1994 Encyclical Letter in which he links ecological sin to the fall (2003:44-47, 284-285). The fall has ‘cosmic implications’: ‘This rebellion instigated the gradual corruption and ultimate destruction of the ecological balance, which continues to this day whenever we violate the commandment of preservation and abstinence and proceed instead to the misuse and abuse of the earth’ (2003:302). He also interprets the flood story as a justification for species protection and for condemning the extinction of apparently ‘useless’ species.

<sup>244</sup> Deane-Drummond stresses that this type of sin is not to be taken lightly: ‘Much of the current suffering of nonhuman nature has emerged through human impacts on the natural world, either directly through exploitative practices or indirectly through disruption of habitats following settlement or climate change effects. I prefer then to see this as a distinct category of *anthropogenic evil*, that is, evils leading to suffering in the nonhuman sphere that arise specifically out of human actions. In this respect, repentance and reconciliation through careful balancing of the needs of the human and nonhuman world would seem to be a more appropriate stance of humanity vis-à-vis nonhuman creation, rather than aspirations toward co-redemption, even if the latter implies the *improvement* of nonhuman nature in human “partnership with God’s redeeming of evolution” [as in the work of Southgate whom she criticises here]. The latter has the added unfortunate effect of lessening the depth of human sin by suggesting that we have the capacity to ameliorate the ills that confront the human and nonhuman worlds. The supposed “partnership with God’s redeeming” almost bypasses

whole list of ecological problems that he identifies as ‘ecological sin’ (in Limouris, 1990:79). The Orthodox report to the World Council of Churches (WCC) similarly condemns ecological devastation as sin and traces it back to the fall which leads to domination, exploitation, poverty, and economic injustice (ibid., 6).<sup>245</sup>

Efthimiou sees ‘degradation of the earth through deforestation and industrial waste and burning fossil fuels’ as a result of human ‘avarice, greed, gluttony, pride and all the negative passions’ (in Hallman, 1994:94).

Popovitch probably goes furthest by suggesting that humans are to give an account for the violence they do to animals and the rest of creation. Impersonating the deer he says:

Therefore, you shall also have to answer for us—for all our torments, troubles, suffering, and deaths. You shall also have to atone for us and on account of us... I have been listening; the blue sky has been whispering to the black earth this eternal truth: On the day of Judgement men will have to give an answer for all the torments, for all of the sufferings, for all the troubles, for all the deaths of all earthly beings and creatures. All the animals, all the birds, all the plants shall rise up and charge the human race with all the pains, with all the injuries, with all the evils, with all the deaths that it has caused them in its arrogant love of sin. For with the human race, before it, and behind it, go sin, death, and hell. (2009:112)

Even in his systematic theology Popovitch argues that the stars ‘weep over our sins’, that the flowers ‘shed hot tears because of our wrongdoings’, that ‘the birds and the animals with all the creatures of God lament this human race that so loves sin’ and that they are in greater communion with the heavens and Christ than sinful humanity (1997b:73).<sup>246</sup> It is remarkable that both these texts were written before the worst effects of the ecological crisis were visible. For Popovitch there is no doubt that our actions in regard to creation are eminently evil and worthy of the severest condemnation. Several Orthodox writers, including Bartholomew and Popovitch, suggest that the best response to this sinful exploitation is an ‘ascetic ethos’.

### 3.3 Asceticism as denial of matter?

The term ‘ascetic’ has already been frequently used in this chapter. Ascesis is indeed the most fitting language for the effort of repentance Lent requires. The sense that human life is disordered and in bondage to passions and evil powers that require overcoming and liberation is central to the Eastern tradition and is exemplified most vividly in desert monasticism. Repentance is its central theme, as evident especially in the sayings of the desert monastics, but also in such later authors as Isaac the Syrian, Dorotheus of Gaza, and many other ascetics (many of their writings are collected in the *Philokalia*). Two great ascetics, John of the Ladder and Mary of Egypt, are honoured during Lent and set up as examples to follow. Monastic asceticism became a training for repentance, a practice of subduing or even eliminating the passions of body and soul and practising the virtues (above all self-control and humility). Such asceticism is seen as preparation for holiness, return to the state of the original Adam, making real the redemption already worked in Christ but not yet evident in the larger world. It is also a kind of martyrdom, dying to the world in order to live for Christ. Yet although many of the ascetic practices in the desert were quite extreme, there was always also a sense that

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considerations of the cross in order to alleviate evolutionary ills. In other words, I am arguing that from a theological point of view, many different varieties of theodicy show themselves up as inadequate, as in all sorts of ways they seem to *reconcile* us to evils, rather than deal with their awful impact’ (2009:173-174).

<sup>245</sup> Khalil also identifies ecological devastation as sin (1978:201).

they just practised more rigorously what is the task and destiny of each Christian.<sup>247</sup> Thus during Lent especially (but of course also throughout the year in many commemorations and celebrations of saints) they are constantly held before us as examples of our own illness and its possible cure.

Yet the strong emphasis on asceticism in the eastern tradition is an ambivalent one.<sup>248</sup> Much of ascetic literature and practice is suffused with a Platonic denial of the body and the material. This is evident to some extent even within the liturgical texts. Of Palamas it is said, for example, ‘in thy wisdom thou hast put to death every lust of the flesh that is condemned to perish, and through asceticism thou hast brought thy soul to life, devoting all its powers to the contemplation of God’ (O3, 319). Here flesh and soul are clearly contrasted to each other.<sup>249</sup> While the flesh and its lusts must be killed, the soul must be brought to life. It does this through ‘contemplation of God’. Frequently, it seems implied by the texts that flesh and body pass away and are associated with sin and death, while the soul is the only worthwhile (and inherently immortal?) part of us. For example, the troparion for Mary of Egypt says: ‘By thine actions thou hast taught us to despise the flesh, for it passes away, but to care for the soul, which is a thing immortal’ (450). The contrast between flesh (here the body) as despicable and the soul as the only thing worth preserving is deeply troubling.<sup>250</sup> Of John Climacus it is said: ‘O holy father, hearing the voice of the Gospel of the Lord, thou hast forsaken the world, counting as naught its riches and its glory’ (Stichera, 354).<sup>251</sup> More problematically, he is described as one who ‘hast passed by the worthless joys of this material world, and raised [his] mind upon the wings of immaterial prayer’ (O6, 362) and as someone ‘who practised abstinence as one who has no flesh’ (Ikos, 363), which by the context clearly does not mean only ‘evil passions’ but corporeality as such.<sup>252</sup> While in the first description

<sup>246</sup> He also frequently points to the response of various creatures (from rocks and the sea to birds, butterflies, flowers, winds, light, and so forth) to Christ and concludes that they listened to him and remained close to him (1997a:45).

<sup>247</sup> Macaire de Simonos-Petra points out that the monastic nature of the Triodion ‘represents the essential dimension of Lenten spirituality’. ‘Far from being marginal, the monastic state is at the heart of the Orthodox church, as a model, as an icon, of the plenitude of evangelical life that all the faithful are invited to imitate, at least once per year, during the forty days which represent a “tithe of the year”’ (1993:38).

<sup>248</sup> Ruether says: ‘For those seeking an ecological ethic for a new era of collapse of empire, the heritage of Christian asceticism is Janus-faced. One side of this tradition, with its hostility to women, sexuality, and the body, and its contempt for the material world in favour of life after death, reinforces the patterns of neglect of and flight from the earth. But asceticism can also be understood, not as rejection of the body and the earth, but rather as a rejection of exploitation and excess, and thus as a return to egalitarian simple living in harmony with other humans and with nature. Even fasting, in moderation, and the adoption of a vegetarian diet can restore a healthy body, rather than express a sick negation of the body. Asceticism in this sense can be seen as a “restoration of paradise”. The monk restores communal property, overcoming the exploitative division of God’s creation into private property that came about through the fall. The monk befriends animals who minister to him, overcoming the enmity between humans and animals that came about after the Flood (Genesis 9:2-3)’ (1992:188).

<sup>249</sup> Indeed such contrasts are prevalent in almost all spiritual and ascetic literature. Flesh can have positive connotations, especially when it refers to the incarnation, but more commonly it stands for everything that is evil and sinful, everything that distracts from God or holiness and thus must be eliminated or at the very least subdued. Ironically, Palamas is actually more positive about the human body and its passions in his own writings than the liturgical texts here suggest.

<sup>250</sup> Similar statements are made in other places. For example, on Thursday of the Fifth Week (Wednesday Vespers): ‘Taking thought for my flesh, I have become the murderer of my soul’ (Stichera, 372).

<sup>251</sup> There is an interesting description in ode one of the canon for the saint: ‘Ascending to the height of virtues and rejecting the pleasures that creep upon the ground, O holy father, thou hast become the sweetness of salvation to thy flock’ (357). One wonders what exactly might be pleasures that ‘creep on the ground’.

<sup>252</sup> A similar ambivalence about the body is evident in the exapostilarion: ‘Thou hast rejected as burdensome the ease of the world; causing thy flesh to waste away through fasting, thou hast renewed the strength of thy soul, and thou wast

one might think that not the entire ‘material world’ is condemned but only its ‘worthless joys’, an abstinence that leads to living as if one had ‘no flesh’ seems rather problematic. Often it appears that the point of the ascetic life is to focus in pure contemplation on God and to ignore the natural order altogether. Ascetics are frequently compared to angels who no longer really live on this earth.<sup>253</sup> Countless ascetic texts support such a view. At times ascetics almost appear to engage in competition as to how little they can eat or sleep and how far they can stay away from anything ‘worldly’. Although extreme excesses are occasionally condemned by the abbas, they are also frequently endorsed and set up as examples for emulation. Needless to say such attitudes are not particularly useful for an ecological vision that would exhort us to care for the earth. Nothing is helped by a denial of the negative comments about corporeality, materiality and the feminine that are clearly present in this literature.<sup>254</sup> These ought to be honestly acknowledged as part of the patristic ascetic culture and atmosphere.<sup>255</sup> Can the stress on asceticism be useful even despite its frequently negative attitude toward the material and the created order?<sup>256</sup>

Yet, there is also another side to the tradition. Even some monastic fathers exhort to balance and condemn extremes. Several theologians stress that passions are natural and given by God. John Damascene, for example, speaks of pleasures and passions as good when they are directed toward God instead of used in ‘unnatural’ fashion (II.13:240). He also clearly affirms the presence of passions in Christ because they are part of what it means to be human and Christ assumed all of human nature (III.20:323; III.23:328). In Christ the passions are directed toward their created end and hence sanctified (III.20:324). He is quite critical of those who reject such a view and contends that they call God’s good creation evil (III.15:313). Maximus had already affirmed that passions can become good, although he does not see them as part of the original plan of creation (Ad Thal.1:98). While linking the passions somewhat problematically with sexuality (which according to him leads to a conflation of natural and unnatural passions), he affirms that Christ assumed the ‘liability to passions’ and overcame their link to sin through his steadfastness during the wilderness temptations (Ad Thal.21:110-111; see also Ad Thal.42). Gregory Palamas carries this further in the fourteenth century by explicitly affirming ‘blessed passions’: ‘There are indeed blessed passions and common activities

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enriched, O honoured saint, with heavenly glory’ (366). Of Mary of Egypt it is said that she has ‘tamed the savagery of the passions’ and ‘broken the rebelliousness of the flesh’ (Stichera, 447).

<sup>253</sup> This is occasionally mentioned in the liturgical texts as well: ‘All the rebellious impulses of the flesh thou hast subdued by thine ascetic labours, showing the manly courage of thy soul. Desiring to behold the Cross of the Lord, O honoured Mother [Mary], in sanctity thou hast crucified thyself unto the world, and thou hast sought with eagerness to emulate the angels in their way of life’ (Sessional Hymn, 452).

<sup>254</sup> Behr’s account of the ascetic tradition is also helpful, precisely because he does not whitewash some of the more negative statements, but clearly acknowledges the ambivalence present in the literature both in regard to the body and to the passions (2006:146-166).

<sup>255</sup> It is far more problematic when similar statements are made (unfortunately far too often) by contemporary ascetics.

<sup>256</sup> This might also suggest that ecological practice does not always require the exact ideology championed by most of its proponents. Indeed, even a rather negative attitude to the body can apparently be quite compatible with minimal effect on the ecology of one’s surroundings. And conversely an embrace of physicality may not automatically lead to a more positive treatment of other creatures. None of the ancients displays the kind of sentimental love for animals (or attempt to identify with them) advocated by many ecologists (and indeed displayed by many pet owners), although there were instances of friendship between individual animals and people and there was also an appreciation of the overall beauty of creation (though again such appreciation did not always lead to a call for its preservation as the example of Isaac the Syrian cited in chapter one illustrates).

of the body and soul, which far from nailing the spirit to the flesh, serve to draw the flesh to a dignity close to that of the spirit, and persuade it too to tend towards what is above' (II.ii.12, Gendle:51). Prayer 'does not dispel the bodily motions which produce a sensible joy and pain' but these motions can actually 'engender prayer' and are bestowed by God as 'a grace' (II.ii.7, 50). It is only 'misuse of the powers of the soul which engenders the terrible passions' and the good passions can actually direct us toward God (II.ii.19, 54). Thus asceticism cannot be a complete rejection of the body in general or of the passions in particular.

Contemporary writers have gone a long way to try to rehabilitate the ascetic tradition and to attempt to clear it from any suspicion of hatred of the body. Schmemmann stresses that 'Christian asceticism is a fight, not *against* but *for* the body' (1969:38). Ware in his introduction to the *Lenten Triodion* firmly rejects an interpretation of asceticism as denial of the body or the material world. He claims that 'the monk by his voluntary self-denial is seeking to affirm the intrinsic goodness and beauty of God's creation' (2002:21). Reiterating Schmemmann's phrase he says: 'Asceticism is a fight not *against* but *for* the body; the aim of fasting is to purge the body from alien defilement and to render it spiritual. By rejecting what is sinful in our will, we do not destroy the God-created body but restore it to its true balance and freedom. In Father Sergei Bulgakov's phrase, we kill the flesh in order to acquire a body. But in rendering the body spiritual, we do not thereby dematerialise it, depriving it of its character as a physical entity.' Hence, 'the Lenten fast does not suppress the physical aspect of our human nature, but makes our materiality once more as God intended it to be' (24). Florovsky claims that 'true asceticism is inspired not by contempt, but by the urge of transformation. The world must be re-instated to its original beauty, from which it fell into sin. It is because of this that asceticism leads to action... One may describe asceticism as an '*eschatology of transfiguration*'" (1974:128; emphasis his). Lossky similarly rejects a dualistic separation of soul and body and insists that the juxtaposition of soul and body against each other is the result of sin:

There is also another obstacle in our consciousness: a certain aftertaste of Manicheism, almost imperceptible, which still remains in our piety and which at times makes us despise the flesh a little too much, not because of sin but by virtue of its material nature. Consequently we forget that this opposition between body and soul, this struggle of the flesh against the spirit and of the spirit against the flesh of which St. Paul speaks, is a result of sin; that the body and the spirit are in reality only two aspects of the human being; that our last end is not only an intellectual contemplation of God but the resurrection of the total man, soul and body, the beatitude of human beings who are going to see God face to face in the fullness of their created nature. (1974:63)

He thus claims that 'the goal of the ascetic life does not consist in a mortification which suppresses the passions of the body, but rather in the acquisition of a new and better energy which would permit the body as well as the spirit to participate in the life of grace' (64).<sup>257</sup> Body and spirit must be held together.

Theokritoff gives the most thorough evaluation of the ascetic tradition and its ecological potential (2009:93-116). She argues that the ascetic ethos implies on the one hand a liberation from destructive desires and on the other the discipline of prayer which opens us to God and the world around us. Asceticism, she contends, has a positive view of the body, inasmuch as body and soul are always held together and the body

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<sup>257</sup> Argenti is even more positive: 'The awareness we experience in discovering what a most extraordinary gift God has given us in entering our flesh, leads to a radical change in our attitude to the body. As the body is called to be a "temple of the Holy Spirit", we are asked to be exceedingly respectful towards it at all times. We are to purify it constantly and increasingly, so that [it] might always be fit to bear Christ' (2006:55).

plays an important role in the ascetic process of directing one's self toward God. The ascetic does not try to get rid of the body per se, but rather purifies the body from 'fleshly' passions in order to enable it to live virtuously.<sup>258</sup> The ascetic ethos also exhorts us to make right use of the material world by overcoming false attachments and desires. It thus frees us to live for others and regard all things as gifts. Abstinence, she insists, 'has nothing to do with denying the goodness of creation. It simply serves as a reminder that using things to the glory of God may equally involve *not* using certain good things under certain conditions, for the sake of the spiritual or physical well-being of our neighbour or ourselves' (109-110). She sees great potential in a contemporary 'ecological asceticism' that would be able to use resources with self-restraint and live more lightly on the planet. The examples of saints enable us to envision a more healthy interaction with animals and the earth, where our perception of creation is transfigured and we can begin to envision all of creation as a harmonious whole (117-154).

And, in fact, ascetics lived and continue to live as simply as possible. They are frequently vegetarian and often even vegan. Their impact on the planet is minimal. They model a lifestyle that does as little harm to the ground, to animals and to plants as humanly possible.<sup>259</sup> Bartholomew strongly advocates what he calls an 'ascetic ethos' in order to respond to the environmental crisis. He speaks of asceticism primarily in terms of self-restraint and reduction of consumption and links this explicitly to a concern for social justice (2003:219; 2011:89-91, 352-353; 2012:89-91, 200-204, 222-223).<sup>260</sup> Asceticism requires simplicity of life, which will lead to a less consumerist attitude. It is an 'attitude of mind and way of life that lead to the respectful use, not abuse, of material goods'. In contrast to a selfish and unrestrained consumerist attitude, 'asceticism is a corrective practice, a way of metanoia, a vision of repentance. Such a vision will lead us from repentance to return, the return to a world in which we give as well as take from creation' (2003:220). This is closely linked, then, to the earlier affirmation that ecological destruction is sinful. In fact, in an address to the environmental symposium in Santa Barbara, Bartholomew seems to imply that asceticism provides a kind of environmental ethics.<sup>261</sup> A pursuit of sanctification is only possible through ascetic struggle, yet Bartholomew emphasises that such ascetic struggle is not a denial or denigration of the body or of matter. Rather, it consists in self-control and discipline instead of rejection of the material. Bartholomew outlines the ascetic injunction as rooted in the possibility for deification. Because creation is a gift from God to humans, it requires ascetic protection and self-restraint from human beings. In another context, he explicates in more detail what the 'ascetical element' in the Orthodox Church entails, interpreting restraint in terms of love, humility, self-

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<sup>258</sup> Bartholomew also links asceticism and virtues: 'the virtues are signs of a person restored and reestablished in its harmony and unity. The impulse of distorted nature, which leads to separation, causes the passions. The same impulse of a nature restored calls for the virtues. All the Fathers insist on the fact that we are not asked to reject and eliminate our natural activities, but to purify them' (1997:85).

<sup>259</sup> Liturgy condemns the love of luxury repeatedly (Fifth Sunday, O8, 458; Stichera, 462).

<sup>260</sup> 'Fasting is more or less the direct opposite of contemporary advertising, which sees the fundamental human desire as the multiplication of needs. And voluntary abstention further allows for a fairer distribution of resources, favouring the justice that love demands' (1997:84; see also 2008:90).

<sup>261</sup> He argues that '*as the Church Fathers also teach, the root of all evils that plague humankind is selfishness, and the highest expression of virtue is selfless love. It is, therefore, not permissible for faithful Christians who are seeking*

control, simplicity, and social justice (2008:66-68). He concludes by stressing that ‘this voluntary ascetical life is not required only of the anchorite monks. It is also required of all Orthodox Christians, according to the measure of balance. Asceticism, even the monastic form, is not negation, but a reasonable and tempered use of the world’ (2003:289). In explicating Patriarch Dimitrios’ dual emphasis on a eucharistic and an ascetic ethos in Orthodoxy, Bartholomew outlines the spirit of asceticism as one of self-restraint and self-limitation in regard to consumption. He claims that ‘this need for an ascetic spirit can be summed up in a single key word: sacrifice. This is the missing dimension of our environmental ethos and ecological action. We are all painfully aware of the fundamental obstacle that confronts us in our work for the environment. It is precisely this: how to move from theory to action, from word to deeds’ (2003:305). Sacrifice helps bridge this gap in Bartholomew’s view.<sup>262</sup>

Like Bartholomew, John Chryssavgis also frequently appeals to asceticism as an alternative lifestyle that challenges the consumerist attitude of our earth-destructive society. He speaks of this earth as ‘not merely a reflection but even a perfection of heaven. Just as we are incomplete without the rest of the animal and the material creation, so, too, the kingdom of God remains incomplete without the world around us’.<sup>263</sup> Similarly, Rogich in his analysis of the Eastern mystical tradition strongly emphasises the need for ascetic effort and links it explicitly to the Eucharist (1990). The spiritual life consists in responsible social action, which Rogich suggest can be appropriated to promote ecological action. Khalil points out that fasting is an important ascetic discipline that has ecological implications (as it is fasting from animal products; 1978:210).<sup>264</sup> Bloom sees the ascetics as providing us with an example for a vegetarian way of life in the context of commenting on the permission to kill animals after the flood:

This is very frightening. It is frightening to imagine that Man, who was called to lead every being along the road to transfiguration, to the fullness of life, came to the point that he could no longer ascend to God, and was compelled to obtain his food by the killing of those which he should have led to perfection. This is where the tragic circle closes. We find ourselves inside this circle. All of us are still incapable of living only for eternal life and according to the word of God, although the saints have in a large measure returned to God’s original conception of Man. The saints show us that we can through prayer and spiritual endeavour gradually free ourselves from the need to feed on the flesh of animals, and, becoming more and more assimilated to God, require less and less of it. (2005:135)

Many contemporary Orthodox authors see ascetic disciplines as concrete examples of more ecological living.

And, in fact, such an attitude is not unsupported by the Patristic literature itself. An interesting example in this respect is Gregory of Nyssa’s (first) homily on ‘love for the poor’.<sup>265</sup> He has apparently exhorted his congregation in previous sermons to practice material abstinence and self-control in respect to

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*sanctification to remain indifferent to the effects of their acts on their fellow human beings’* (2003:250; emphasis his). He ends this with a call for political leaders to take action on behalf of the environment.

<sup>262</sup> He sees this again primarily in terms of ethics, which was indeed the theme for that particular conference. He spells out in detail what sacrifice means and what it might entail (2003:306-307). Interestingly enough, he ends up linking his analysis of sacrifice and its ecological importance to a liturgical view of sacrifice rooted in Theophany. Sacrifice sanctifies and ‘transforms the entire world’: ‘*Without the cross, without sacrifice, there can be no blessing and no cosmic transfiguration*’ (2003:308; emphasis his).

<sup>263</sup> See his introduction to Bartholomew (2003:94). Ware makes a similar point in his article ‘Lent and the Consumer Society’ (in Walker & Carras, 1996:64-84).

<sup>264</sup> Bartholomew also explicitly refers to fasting as a corrective to wasting (2012:202-203).

<sup>265</sup> Page numbers refer to the translation provided in Holman (2001:193-199).

food (maybe in the context of Lent?). Now he goes on to explain to them ‘an abstinence that is spiritual, and self-control that is immaterial: this is the renunciation of sin that turns toward the soul’. Yet what he calls sins of the ‘soul’ turn out to be very concrete evils that affect other humans and even nature. He admonishes them: ‘Practise self-control in your appetite for other people’s belongings! Renounce dishonest profits! Starve to death your greed for Mammon. Let there be nothing at your house that has been acquired by violence or theft. What good is it to keep meat out of your mouth if you bite your brother with wickedness? What good does it serve you to observe a strict frugality at home if you unjustly steal from the poor?’ (193). He summarises again the kind of abstinence and fasting to which he had invited them previously and shows that these must have ‘internal’ effects as well: ‘For if we abstain from wine and meat while clearly and publically yielding to sin, I guarantee and testify to you that the ascetic regime of water and vegetables has no good effect, if the internal disposition is incongruent with external appearances. Fasting was ordained for the soul’s purification. If our thoughts and actions degrade it, why force ourselves to drink nothing but water, and why work this filthy quagmire? To what advantage is fasting of the body if the spirit is not clean?’ He responds: ‘All our austerity likewise does no good unless it nurtures other virtues and receives them as a companion’ (193-94).<sup>266</sup> Most importantly for our purposes, Gregory then describes the luxuries in which many of his contemporaries engage and which are harmful to animals, in language that suggests how strongly he disapproves of their practices:

Use; do not misuse; so, too, Paul teaches you. Find your rest in temperate relaxation. Do not indulge in a frenzy of pleasures. Don’t make yourself a destroyer of absolutely all living things, whether they be four-footed and large or four-footed and small, birds, fish, exotic or common, a good bargain or expensive. The sweat of the hunter ought not to fill your stomach like a bottomless well that many men digging cannot fill. Our gourmards do not, in fact, spare even the bottom of the sea, nor do they limit themselves to the fish that swim in the water, but they also bring up the crawling marine beasts from the ocean bed and drag them to shore. One pillages the oyster banks, one pursues the sea urchin, one captures the creeping cuttle fish, one plucks the octopus from the rock it grips, one eradicates the molluscs from their pedestal. All animal species, those that swim in the surface waters or live in the depths of the sea, all are thus brought up into the atmosphere. The artful skills of the hedonist cleverly devise traps appropriate to each. (198)

Gregory firmly condemns those who indulge in the luxuries of his time (one wonders what he would have said of our contemporary consumer society) and describes the suffering of the poor in moving terms.<sup>267</sup> Christ’s

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<sup>266</sup> Interestingly enough, in this context he provides a beautiful description of God as Creator to demonstrate how God ‘is the original designer of good deeds’ and cares for the poor and needy: ‘It is God Himself, who in the first instance manifests Himself to us as the author of good and philanthropic deeds: the creation of the earth, the arrangement of the heavens, the well-ordered rhythm of the seasons, the warmth of the sun, the formation, by cooling, of ice, in short, all things, individually, He created not for Himself—for He had no need of such things—but He maintains them continually on our behalf; invisible farmer of human nourishment, He sows at the opportune moment and waters the earth skilfully. He gives seed to the sower, as Isaiah says (Isa. 55:10), now sprinkling water from the clouds in a gentle shower, later flooding the furrows in a violent downpour. When the delicate buds sprout and green blades appear, He sets the sun over them which, now uncovered, extends its warm and fiery rays so that the ears of grain may become ripe for harvest. He also causes the clusters of vine to swell, and in the autumn distils His wine for the thirsty and fattens our various flocks that humankind may have abundant meat. The fleece of some supply us with wool, the skin of others provide us with shoes. You see, God is the original designer of good deeds, nourishing the starving, watering the thirsty, clothing those who are naked, as has been said earlier’ (196).

<sup>267</sup> So does Photios in a homily for Good Friday: ‘Why, when others are wasted away by hunger, dost thou live luxuriously, and hamperest nature, and crampest thy stomach, and fattenest thy flesh, and thickenest thy body, to be, alas, shortly laid out for worms to devour, and to be ground into dust? Why raisest thou thy eyebrows, and puffest up thy cheeks, and lookest lordly, forgetting or disregarding that ‘dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return,’ and that ‘man is



own sufferings are exemplified in the suffering bodies of the poor, in particular in the severely mutilated bodies of the lepers.<sup>268</sup> The ascetic lifestyle, which every Christian should practise in his view, does not indulge in luxuries that cause harm to the creation (including oysters, sea urchins, creeping cuttle fish, octopi and molluscs) but instead is characterised by compassion for the poor and possibly also the animals who suffer from such luxurious consumption.

One concrete way in which the liturgical practices of Lent might make a real difference to our involvement with the creation is the sacrament of confession. If destruction of the earth is a sin then surely it should be brought to confession (although communal confession might also be necessary in this case). In fact, several Orthodox writers on ecological issues mention Father Amphilochios on the island of Patmos who had the habit of making the local farmers who came to him for confession plant trees as a penance (e.g., Ware, 1997:5). Apparently he also checked to make sure these young trees were watered properly. Surely planting trees and taking other restorative ecological measures would be appropriate ‘penances’ for ‘ecological sin’ (unfortunately it is probably not sufficiently confessed to work in any clear-cut fashion).<sup>269</sup> Certainly ecological measures can be taken in other ways, including tree-planting and clean-up projects by church schools and other church-related groups—maybe connected to some of the ‘tree imagery’ within the liturgy.<sup>270</sup> Other examples of asceticism on an ecclesial level might include ensuring that the church building is as energy-efficient as possible and that energy or water are not wasted unnecessarily. Patriarch Bartholomew actually counsels something like this explicitly:

Among the young, who already enjoy walking through forests and mountains and by the sea, it must instil a sense of the mystery of the presence of the living God in all things, of the sacramentality of nature through the breath of the Spirit. They should be taught to plant trees, to preserve forests, to clean our polluted lakes and seas. It would also be possible to restore to cultivation, or cultivate anew, wild or abandoned lands while respecting the natural rhythms, refusing to poison them with chemicals, creating places of beauty.... All this can be done in the atmosphere of a simple and powerful liturgy, renewed, perhaps re-created, which would bestow on existence an odour of resurrection. (1997:109; also 2011:172).

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like to vanity: his days pass as a shadow.’ Why disregardest thou the hungry, and abominatest the poor—because thou livest more daintily than they, or rather, because thou hast wasted their necessary food on thy dissolute wantonness, and deprived them of drink by intoxicating thyself to excess, or because thou hast made the misfortunes of others thy own pleasures? ... Dost thou swagger arrogantly on account of those very things over which thou oughtst to groan, to look downcast, to lament and to repent, and dost thou puff out thy inflated vainglory, even perchance in the face of a famished man, when it is considered even by the most boastful that seeking to lord it over such a one is a degradation of their dignity?’ (1958:67). Throughout the homily he exhorts his audience to compassion and hospitality and ends by telling his listeners that nature itself calls them to repentance (73).

<sup>268</sup> Gregory Nazianzen uses very similar arguments in his homily on the same subject (Oration 14). See also Nyssa’s second homily on love for the poor which focuses primarily on lepers (in Holman, 2001:199-206).

<sup>269</sup> Clark suggests that liturgical repentance is not sufficient: ‘If we are God’s favourites and He will forgive us everything it is easy to conclude that we are at liberty to demand a proper respect from others. How else do royal favourites act? This may be one further explanation for the complacent sentimentalism that, I am afraid, hangs round some conventionally light green theologizing: it is enough to say that we appreciate God’s grandeur, while happily eating up our feathered, finny and four-footed cousins—and “the children of the Sahel”. One message of the gospel is that we are *not* God’s favourites, but forgiven on the express condition that we ourselves forgive, that we do not demand our rights. By giving up our lives we gain them; by seeking to maintain our lives and livelihood we lose them all. ... The enterprise is a lot more difficult than the ritual commitment to forgiveness that our liturgies require. We had better, as a beginning, proclaim again “the acceptable year of the Lord”, the Jubilee, and forgive all Third World debts. Until we do, our “gratitude” is sentimental’ (1993:133). Yet surely such action for justice is not in contradiction to the liturgical call for repentance.

<sup>270</sup> Berhane-Sellassie reports such activities in an Ethiopian Orthodox community (in Hallman, 1994).

Here concrete ecological activity flows out of the liturgical dimension and might even lead to a ‘re-creation’ of liturgy.

Ware suggests more generally that Lent can remind us of God’s good creation: ‘Lent cleanses the doors of our perception, so that we recognise anew this intrinsic and universal holiness... we can recover through the observance of Lent a sacramental view of the universe’ (in Walker & Carras, 1996:82). The ascetic effort is not a rejection of the world, but ‘fasting and abstinence correct the distortion in our relationship with the material world, purifying us from the effects of sinfulness, and restoring our primal vision of the created order. Asceticism is in this way not a negation but a vindication of the innate holiness of all material things’ (83). He concludes his essay by bringing together several of the themes just discussed: ‘Lent, so far from being world-denying, is in reality intensely world-affirming. This is a fallen world, full of the ugliness and pollution caused by human sin and selfishness. But it is also God’s world, a world full of beauty and wonder, marked everywhere with the signature of the Creator, and this we can rediscover through a true observance of the Great Fast’ (84). Lent can help us move from exploitative relations with nature to living in harmony with the rest of creation.

If the ascetic life is truly the paradigm for all Christian living, we should think very carefully about how it is presented to the faithful. Not only are ecological concerns not foremost in such presentations, but often it is still presented in a purely spiritualised fashion that capitalises on the imagery that speaks negatively of the body or of materiality. It is also frequently portrayed as purely individual, exacerbating the perception that one’s personal spiritual life is not linked to the larger community and certainly not to the rest of creation.<sup>271</sup> Here the homilies that establish connections between personal sin and larger social evils are important. Too often even ‘original sin’ is read in highly individualistic terms instead of being employed for addressing larger issues of systemic evil. The world opened by the liturgy instead can allow us to realise that we are *both* personally culpable *and also* part of a larger problem and it can help us seek repentance and redemption *together* on multiple levels. The Patristic homilies on poverty might also encourage contemporary homilists to address such themes without fear of succumbing to a ‘liberal’ agenda or ‘subverting’ the liturgical occasions.<sup>272</sup> If destroying the very conditions of life for other people (especially the poor) and for other creatures is indeed evil and sinful, then it requires repentance and fundamental changes in ways of living on personal, communal, and systemic levels. What better time than Lent to encourage such repentance and metanoia?

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<sup>271</sup> Papathanasiou laments this in his analysis of contemporary Greek theology: ‘The Kingdom tends to be identified with personal sanctity or purification from the passions, in such a way that the perspective of the promised future renewal of all creation is lost’ (in Cunningham & Theokritoff, 2008:223).

<sup>272</sup> Schmemmann was often highly critical of such ‘subversions’ and unfortunately rejected almost any attempt to speak of issues of social justice as somehow part of a ‘liberal’ agenda. (Most of his scathing comments are contained in his journals which were published after his death. One wonders whether these comments were really all meant for public consumption.) A similar fear still pervades much contemporary Orthodoxy. Yet this often leads to a highly individualistic and purely ‘spiritual’ interpretation of the liturgy—an interpretation Schmemmann himself consistently rejected.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **‘Things Above Keep Feast with Things Below’: Theophany and Transfiguration**

#### 1.0 Introduction

Theophany and Transfiguration are not explicitly linked liturgically, although most homilies on the transfiguration mention the similar divine voice affirming Christ’s sonship at the baptism and thus draw a tentative parallel between them.<sup>273</sup> While Theophany is a very early feast (at least in the East), originally often including nativity themes and emerging as a separate celebration in the late fourth century,<sup>274</sup> the Transfiguration as a separate feast is considerably later (especially its August 6th date).<sup>275</sup> Together with the Dormition, which by its theme would also fit well into this chapter, it is the final feast of the liturgical year and indeed constitutes a sort of culmination of the theological progression of salvation. Most homilists and the liturgical texts themselves see the transfiguration of Christ as a confirmation and promise of the eschaton: in Christ we see what a glorified and transformed human is like. The transfiguration anticipates Christ’s glorification after his resurrection and even his ascension. It is thus in some sense theologically later than any of these feasts (and thus seems appropriately placed at the end of the church year, despite the arguments of some commentators who would like to see it linked more closely with Lent and the journey to the cross).<sup>276</sup> Indeed, Bulgakov says in a homily on the Transfiguration: ‘It is as if the date for this feast were chosen at random, linked to the time of the sanctification of the fruits. This sanctification is, of course, not essentially specifically for the feast of Transfiguration. But the seeming randomness of the date of this feast has a more profound meaning: in its inner significance, the event of the Lord’s Transfiguration points to the life of the future age, outside of our time. It refers to the Kingdom of Glory, to the transfiguration of the world, which is

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<sup>273</sup> Such a connection is mentioned already in a text on the transfiguration attributed to Clement of Alexandria and then also in the homilies by Chrysostom, John of Jerusalem, Proclus, Anastasius of Sinai, Andrew of Crete, John Damascene, Palamas and others. Most contemporary authors also point out the connection. To give just three examples: Proclus draws a geographical connection between them: ‘And Hermon is a small mountain near the Jordan,/where Elijah was taken up./And close to it, in the streams of the Jordan, Christ was baptised as he wished,/and the Son was acknowledged by the Father./On both these mountains the immaculate Father, confirming the sonship,/calls out now for a second time as he did then’ (8.4, 147). Andrew of Crete even claims that both Tabor and Jordan show the ‘same mystery’ (Coune:181). Bulgakov finds the connection in Christ’s life and work: ‘An attentive reading of the Gospel narrative convinces us that this event was a watershed in His life, analogous to the one that consisted in the appearance of Christ to the world in the Baptism. In its human aspect, the Baptism manifests Christ’s mature will to His ministry; it is an initiation, as it were, into the ministry. On the other hand, the Transfiguration manifests His mature will to the Passion, to the journey to Jerusalem for the death on the cross’ (2008a:139).

<sup>274</sup> The feast of the Nativity was actually often called Theophany, while the celebration of the baptism was often referred to as the ‘feast of lights’. Very early on Christ’s birth, circumcision, the visit of the magi, and the baptism were celebrated together as one feast in some areas (Johnson, 2000:265-371).

<sup>275</sup> Andronikof claims, however, that the Transfiguration is a very early feast that was celebrated before the fourth century (1970:254).

<sup>276</sup> The Transfiguration is actually linked with the cross insofar as it is roughly forty days before the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross in mid-September.

attested in a certain anticipation, in a vision *from here*' (2008a:138). Andronikof calls it 'the most teleological feast'; it provides the 'key to eschatology' and 'justifies all of Christian eschatology' (1970:244, 272).

Furthermore, the Theophany, which celebrates Christ's baptism, is at the beginning of Christ's ministry and thus does not seem to have a natural link to the Transfiguration besides its revelation of the triune relationships. Yet many homilists and liturgical poets read the Theophany as an anticipation of Christian baptism, which only becomes possible after Christ's resurrection and sending of the Spirit. It can hence also be said to foreshadow the continued Christian life, which moves from baptism (Theophany) to deification (Transfiguration). More practically, these feasts are here juxtaposed in a final chapter because they are the two feasts that speak most explicitly of the sanctification of the material world and of all creatures within it. Neither Theophany nor Transfiguration are limited to human beings, but they sanctify all of creation and carry it to its eschatological culmination. They thus will serve to confirm and bring together the findings of the previous three chapters.

### 1.1 'World' opened by liturgy

The central theme of the feast of Theophany, as is evident in its most prominent liturgical action, is the sanctification of the waters. This is affirmed to be the point of Christ's baptism who himself did not need cleansing from sin (in some of the oldest homilies other reasons are given but the present liturgical texts focus almost exclusively on the sanctification of the waters). It is made explicit not only by the elaborate blessing of waters within the church at this feast, but also by the blessing of streams, rivers, fields and houses in conjunction with this feast. The liturgy of Theophany blesses and sanctifies all of creation. Yet Theophany also has other themes that are connected to this larger one. The liturgical texts speak repeatedly of purification (closely associated with the water), illumination (it is the 'feast of lights'), and liberation from the powers of evil. It is also celebrated as a first manifestation of the Trinity.<sup>277</sup>

Theosis has become the central theme of the feast of the Transfiguration. A development is clearly evident here, since most early homilies on this topic do not stress that theme as strongly. It only slowly emerges over time.<sup>278</sup> Both the Dormition and the Transfiguration are now heavily eschatological in character. They provide a foretaste of the goal of the Christian life and the goal of all God's interaction with the creation: sanctification and transfiguration. The theme of the sanctification of all of nature is more evident in the feast of Theophany and deification of humans is more stressed at the Transfiguration, yet both themes are evident in both feasts.

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<sup>277</sup> Ware comments extensively on this in his introduction to the *Festal Menaion* (1998:56-59). He points out a parallel to this in the feast of the transfiguration: 'Like Theophany, although less explicitly, the Transfiguration is a revelation of the Holy Trinity. On Tabor, as at the baptism in Jordan, the Father speaks from heaven, testifying to the divine Sonship of Christ: and the Spirit is also present, on this occasion not in the likeness of a dove, but under the form of dazzling light, surrounding Christ's person and overshadowing the whole mountain. This dazzling light is the light of the Spirit' (62).

## 1.2 Symbolism, Polyphony, Limit-Expressions

The feasts create their poetic worlds primarily through the use of dialogue and hyperbole. Early Theophany homilies are usually characterised by extensive dialogues between John and Christ and between the river Jordan and John. The personification of Jordan is derived from a psalm verse which asks: ‘Why do you turn back, O Jordan?’ (Psalm 114:3). This verse becomes the main justification that the river recognises Christ and is more aware of his divinity than John or the crowd.<sup>279</sup> The idea that Christ is God and thus sanctifies anything he touches is already used at the Annunciation and the Nativity where Christ sanctifies the human body in general and Mary’s womb in particular by becoming incarnate in them. (Ephrem regards the Jordan as a second ‘womb’—the tomb is the third.) What Christ touches becomes holy. Gregory Nazianzen makes this particularly clear when he suggests that Christ ‘sleeps in order to bless sleep’ and weeps ‘in order to make tears blessed’ (37.2, NPNF:338). Christ’s divinity and John’s refusal to baptise him (including the Jordan’s desire to escape) are often highlighted through these dialogues.<sup>280</sup>

Similarly, Christ’s transfiguration is a limit-experience in every sense of that word. It takes place on a high mountain (originally associated with the Mount of Olives but fairly quickly with Mount Tabor<sup>281</sup>), traditionally a liminal place.<sup>282</sup> Only a select number of disciples are permitted to join Jesus (most commentators and homilists claim this is because Judas was not worthy of this vision, but would have apparent reasons for a grudge against Christ if he alone was left behind at the foot of the mountain<sup>283</sup>). Two figures of the past appear, Moses and Elijah, read by some commentators and liturgical texts as representative of the law and the prophets, by others as representing the realm of the dead (Moses) and that of the heavens (Elijah who did not die but was assumed into heaven alive).<sup>284</sup> And if that were not enough, a bright light appears and a voice speaks from heaven while enveloping the scene with a cloud. In every way this is an excessive experience. Such excess is obvious also at Theophany where the heavens similarly open for God’s speech. Many early liturgical texts apparently also spoke of flashing fire or a great light during the baptism.<sup>285</sup>

The most prominent symbol at Theophany is water, while at the Transfiguration the central symbol is light. Yet these are closely linked. In both cases Christ is immersed in or suffused by them and in both cases they are blessed by the Father speaking and the descent of the Spirit—in one case as a visible dove, in the

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<sup>278</sup> Proclus of Constantinople seems to be the first to speak explicitly of it as showing ‘the future transfiguration of our nature’. He also sees it as heralding the second coming. (Coune:79).

<sup>279</sup> Thus the personification of paradise in the Lenten liturgies seems quite appropriate (contra Andronikof).

<sup>280</sup> This is also characteristic of the liturgy for the Synaxis of John the Baptist, celebrated on the day following Theophany, Jan. 7 (Ware, 1998:388-405).

<sup>281</sup> The pilgrim of Bordeaux (in 333) locates the transfiguration on the Mount of Olives, while Egeria (in 381) already reports it for Mount Tabor. Wilkinson notes this and claims the association of mountains changed during that time. It could theoretically, of course, also be a misunderstanding on the part of the anonymous pilgrim. Wilkinson’s edition includes the text of the Bordeaux pilgrim’s report (1999:22-34).

<sup>282</sup> Andronikof comments on this issue in his study of the liturgies for the feasts of the Transfiguration and the Ascension (1981:16).

<sup>283</sup> Most Patristic homilists mention this reason. Proclus points out specifically that the other disciples are ‘mystically present’ (Coune:78).

<sup>284</sup> The (living) disciples represent the earth, in between heavens and Hades. It seems that these three were thought to be the main realms of being by the ancient writers. This is also very visible in the liturgy which often has ‘heaven and earth’ rejoice thus presumably representing two of the three realms. It may be another way of saying ‘everything’.

other as a cloud (that makes invisible to some extent). And, in fact, light was early on also associated with Theophany, which was called the ‘feast of lights’ and spoke of light or fire appearing in the Jordan scene. It was celebrated close to the winter solstice when the northern hemisphere turns from darkness to light and the time of light begins to grow again. The liturgy of Theophany still retains some of this focus on light: ‘Behold, the Light is made manifest; behold, our propitiation is revealed; behold, the Saviour approaches to give the light of divine brightness to those in darkness. With pure minds let us welcome Him in joy’ (Forefeast, O1, 304).<sup>286</sup> Andronikof actually calls it ‘the feast of *the illumination of the created*’ (1970:176; emphasis his). The same stress on light (more obviously) characterises the Transfiguration: ‘The cloud of light shone around them on every side, and they heard the voice of the Father confirming the mystery of Thine Incarnation’ (Aposticha, 477). Yet there are also differences between the two feasts: while the water is sanctified by Christ’s presence, the light at the transfiguration seems to constitute a confirmation of his divinity or coming glorification. There is a hint that Christ’s presence (or the light or the cloud) does indeed have a sanctifying effect on the ground, but this remains only a tentative suggestion. It is interesting, however, that so much meaning is lodged in what are primarily natural phenomena: water and light.

There are also elements of polyphony and discordance present. The transfiguration chronologically<sup>287</sup> takes place before the crucifixion and Christ’s upcoming passion is a theme of discussion between him and Moses and Elijah. The tension between ‘already’ and ‘not yet’ is strongly evident in both feasts. The waters are sanctified, but not all of creation is sanctified yet. Nor is it a permanent magical transformation. Thus we and our surroundings must be sanctified anew each year. Christ has been transfigured before the disciples, but only ‘as far as they could bear it’ (as the troparion affirms) and although we are to be divinised this process is far from complete and in constant tension with the reality of our lives and the world around us. As in the other feasts the tension between eschatological fulfilment (what is happening ‘today’) and continued expectation remains.

### 1.3 Actions

What are expected actions from these feasts and their celebrations? Many festal homilies, as we have already seen in chapter 5 especially those for Marian feasts, are of a strongly panegyric/encomian character and thus suggest few concrete implications (especially of an ethical character). They primarily exhort to praise and jubilation. To some extent this is also true of the Transfiguration homilies, although they contain a stronger expectation of living a holy life that might thus prepare itself for transfiguration. John Chrysostom, however, true to his usual practical exegesis, employs a homily on the text of the transfiguration for a thorough admonition against wealth and usury and to exhort his audience to give alms generously and care for the poor and their misery (Coune:45-63). Andrew of Crete sees the feast of the Transfiguration as an occasion

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<sup>285</sup> See Winkler’s detailed analysis of this (1997 and in Johnson, 2000:291-347).

<sup>286</sup> Also during Theophany itself: ‘Come then, naked children of Adam, and let us clothe ourselves in Him, that we may warm ourselves. Thou art a protection and veil to the naked, a light to those in darkness, Thou hast come, Thou art made manifest, the Light that no man can approach’ (Matins, Ikos, 375).

<sup>287</sup> That is, in the chronology of Christ’s earthly life, as reported by the biblical accounts.

to exhort his listeners to great love and acts of charity, which he interprets in the context of deification (Coune:169, 173).

Theophany, on the other hand, has very clear implications for actions. Indeed, the actions are themselves part of the liturgy or are at least begun and presupposed there, namely the blessing of the waters. These actions continue in the blessings of houses and many areas of nature (rivers, fields, animals). In fact, the liturgy stipulates a second blessing after liturgy at a spring, river, or the ocean (the first takes place within the church at the conclusion of vespers or of a vesperal liturgy).<sup>288</sup> It has become customary also to bless fruits (especially grapes but also apples or other fruit depending on the local climate) at the Transfiguration which is to some extent associated with an early harvest feast (or a Jewish feast of ‘firstfruits’).<sup>289</sup> These blessings of the firstfruits go back to ancient traditions for which there is evidence in the first centuries of the Christian church (Bradshaw in McMichael, 1993). But there certainly is a recognition in all these feasts that the liturgy has implications for how non-human (and, in fact, non-animal) creation is treated. Fruit, flowers, rivers, and the ground have value and can be sanctified and blessed. They are either brought into the church or the liturgical actions are carried out to them. In fact, in many areas the entire liturgy of Theophany is celebrated under the open sky near rivers and springs—often in freezing conditions, as this feast falls in January.<sup>290</sup>

## 2. How is creation already present?

The feast of Theophany is full of references to the material creation, especially the water. There is no doubt that all the earth is blessed and sanctified by Christ’s baptism. This is the central theme of the feast. As we have seen there are similar references to the sanctification of the cosmos (represented by the four elements: air, water, fire, earth) in the Dormition liturgy and homilies. As in many of the other feasts already discussed, it is also made very clear that all creation rejoices at the feast of Theophany, but here the rejoicing is linked explicitly with a real sanctification of this creation. The implications of the transfiguration for the earth or any non-human creatures are made less clear within the liturgical texts. Yet, as we will see, such connotations are not excluded and are made explicit by some homilists.<sup>291</sup> Several stages of this sanctification of the earth can be discerned: a purification of creation—especially the waters—from the powers of evil, creation’s recognition of Christ’s divinity, the sanctification of the waters and all creation by their concrete encounter with him, and their eschatological transformation.

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<sup>288</sup> Ware specifies: ‘After the prayer behind the ambo [near the end of liturgy], the second Blessing of the Waters takes place. During the singing of the sticheron, “The voice of the Lord upon the waters”, the clergy and people proceed in procession to a nearby river or spring, or to the sea shore, and the blessing is held there in the open air. The same order of service is followed as on the previous day’ (1998:387). Occasionally this second blessing can also take place at the end of Matins (384).

<sup>289</sup> The Greek Menaion mentions grapes (Ware, 1998:502). Andronikof suggests that these grapes stand as a ‘symbol of all fruits of the earth’ (1970:251).

<sup>290</sup> The practice of celebrating outside is not particular to the feast of Theophany.

<sup>291</sup> Andronikof in his examination of the liturgy for the Transfiguration actually claims that this feast ‘contains the Christian philosophy of nature’ (1970:248). He interprets it throughout as a restoration of paradise and a return to the original state of creation.

## 2.1 Purification

One of the primary uses of water is cleansing. This is also one of the main connotations of the use of water in baptism (although there are also others such as the imagery of death and resurrection). Cleansing and purification are stressed also in the liturgies of Theophany. Here it is not Christ who needs cleansing, as is generally true of the candidates for baptism, rather Christ himself purifies the waters by his baptism. Instead of the water cleansing him, it becomes cleansed through encounter with him. Sometimes the benefits of this cleansing are specifically attributed to humans. In his baptism Christ prepares the waters of baptism, which cleanse believers from their impurity: ‘Christ comes to grant through baptism deliverance to all the faithful. For thereby He cleanses Adam and lifts him up, putting to shame the tyrant who had laid him low; He opens the heavens, brings down the divine Spirit, and grants man a share of incorruption... O marvellous gifts! O divine grace and forbearance past speech! For behold, the Fashioner and Master now wears my nature in the Jordan, yet without sin; He cleanses me through water, enlightens me through fire, and makes me perfect through the divine Spirit’ (Forefeast, Compline, O8, 301).<sup>292</sup> Language of ‘filth’ is again used in this context: ‘The Lord who purges away the filth (τὸν ῥύπον) of men was cleansed in Jordan for their sake, having of His own will made Himself like unto them, while still remaining that which He was’ (O1, 367).<sup>293</sup> Yet it is not only humans who are cleansed here. The waters themselves are purified. The second canon for the same ode prays that God would ‘cleanse the creation from all its filth (Ρύπου τε παντός, εκκαθάραι τὴν κτίσιν)’ (368).<sup>294</sup> Interestingly enough, in one instance Christ himself is compared to rain: ‘The mighty Rain comes forth in the flesh to the streams of the river, desiring baptism’ (Forefeast, O3, 305; repeated at the Synaxis of John the Baptist).

Why does the water require such cleansing? Most fundamentally, because it has been sullied by human sin (the ‘filth’ referred to a moment ago). But there is also a further sense in which it requires purification. Satan is often pictured as having acquired dominion over the waters: ‘Of old the prince of this world was named king also of all that was in the waters; but by Thy cleansing he is choked and destroyed, as Legion in the lake. With Thy mighty arm Thou hast granted freedom, O Saviour, to Thy creation, which he had enslaved’ (Forefeast, Compline, O6, 300). The waters are filled with the powers of darkness.<sup>295</sup> Demons and evil spirits are imagined to live in the waters. Christ thus frees the waters from this bondage by Satan by purifying it from all evil powers: ‘Christ now comes in haste to the waters, to crush the heads of the dragon’ (Forefeast, O5, 306). This is reiterated during the feast of Theophany itself: ‘The Lord, King of the ages, in the streams of the Jordan formed Adam anew, who was fallen into corruption, and He broke in pieces the

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<sup>292</sup> ‘And now in abundant floods He washes him clean/From the ancient shame of Adam’s sinfulness’ (O5, 373). On occasion this purification happens via fire instead of water: ‘He who formerly turned the sea into dry land and made springs of water gush forth from the rock, now makes the stream of Jordan a furnace wherein our offences are refined by the fire of the Spirit’ (Forefeast, Compline, O4, 298).

<sup>293</sup> Earlier in the same ode, it is Adam’s corruption (τὸν φθαρέντα) that is reshaped.

<sup>294</sup> The office of Compline recalls language from the Nativity and combines it with that of Theophany: ‘Thou hast received from all the creation ministers at Thy mystery: Gabriel from among the angels, the Virgin from among men, the Star from among the heavens, and Jordan from among the waters; and in its stream Thou hast washed away the transgression of the world’ (Litya, 361).

<sup>295</sup> Theokritoff also briefly comments on this ‘occupation’ of creation by hostile forces (2009:176).



heads of the dragons that were hidden there' (O1, 367). Indeed, some Theophany icons show demons scattering as Christ enters the water. Often the imagery of cleansing of waters and expulsion of demons is invoked together: 'Ye faithful, let us praise the greatness of God's dispensation towards us. For, becoming man on account of our transgression, He who alone is clean and undefiled was cleansed in the Jordan that we might be made clean, sanctifying us and the waters, and crushing the heads of the dragons in the water' (Sticheron after blessing, 359). This is also demonstrated by baptismal ceremonies where the water is first exorcised and then blessed.<sup>296</sup> While the feast of the Transfiguration, not being linked in any way to water, does not employ the language of purification in the same way, there is one reference to the powers of light triumphing over the powers of darkness in imagery that recalls the waters of chaos of Genesis: 'Thou hast parted the light from the original chaos, that Thy works might celebrate Thee in light, O Christ, as their Creator: do Thou direct our paths in Thy light' (O5, 486). Genesis 1 is read again at the Vespers of Theophany (as at Nativity and Pascha; 339).

The association of Christ's baptism with a sanctification of the waters is quite early.<sup>297</sup> Originally, it seems to have meant a purification of the baptismal waters and only later does this appear to have been extended to water in general. Melito of Sardis in a 'Fragment on Baptism' provides a beautiful description of how water cleanses the whole earth and how the earth around the Nile is affected by the water including air and winds (SC123:229). Yet, he does not speak explicitly of a sanctification of the waters, but seems to use these images as a symbolic representation of the purifying and nourishing powers of water. Gregory Nazianzen explicitly links Christ's baptism with the sanctification of the (baptismal) waters: 'He was baptised as a human, but he relieved sins as God, but it was in order to sanctify the waters' (29.10, NPNF:221). In his homily on Theophany (i.e. Nativity), he previews the celebration of baptism which will happen soon: 'All little later, then, you will also see Jesus cleansed in the Jordan with the same bath that cleanses me—or rather, making the water holy by his cleansing, for the one who "takes away the sin of the world" had no need of purification' (38.16, Daley:125). Hesychius of Jerusalem, in a Homily on John the Baptist, imagines John and Christ engaged in a dialogue where Christ asks John rhetorical questions: 'If I am not baptised, who will sanctify the waters of baptism, who will crush the heads of the dragon, how will the elements be able to be cleansed, how will creation be able to be purified, how will the soiled vessels of Adam be able to be washed?' (XVI.17, 689). Proclus also employs imagery of purification in portraying the paradox of Christ's baptism: 'How shall I dare to baptise you?/When is fire purified by grass?/When does clay wash a fountain?/How shall I, the guilty one, baptise you, the Judge?/How shall I baptise you, O Lord?/I see no blemish in you./You did not become subjected to the curse of Adam' (7.4, 127). This paradox is also strongly stressed by the liturgies themselves, which frequently personify the river Jordan or imagine a dialogue between John and Jordan (or Christ) to wonder about this mystery of the Creator coming to be baptised.

<sup>296</sup> In fact, Ware points out that 'the Great Blessing of the Waters on Theophany is almost identical with the prayer of blessing said over the font at the sacrament of baptism' (1998:58).

<sup>297</sup> For an overview of the development see Dalamais (1988:59-71) and Vidalis (2001:237-257).

Although the liturgies of the feast of the Transfiguration do not speak explicitly of purification, which seems most naturally connected with water, a homily on that topic attributed (probably falsely) to Ephrem strongly emphasises Christ's flesh in the transfiguration. It is 'susceptible to the same weaknesses as our flesh, except sin' (Coune:108). Although he does not explicitly speak of a purification of this flesh, he does stress that it is still present after the resurrection. A homily by Elias the Armenian sees Christ triumphing over the powers of shadow and darkness, which he drives from the world in the transfiguration (Coune:120). This seems similar to the banishment of the 'dragons' in the Jordan waters. Andrew of Crete suggests that nothing in creation can grasp God entirely but that also nothing 'is excluded from communion with the Good' (Coune:178). God's goodness is extended over all things by 'illuminations distributed without counting' (Coune:178). Hence the light of the transfiguration does seem to have some purifying function although this is not made explicit.

## 2.2 Recognition of Christ

It is frequently stressed in the liturgies that the creation recognises Christ and is surprised at his demand to be baptised: 'The things above the earth and on the earth were amazed' (Forefeast, Compline, O1, 297). They are amazed because this is the *Creator* coming to be baptised: 'When the creation beheld Thee in the flesh covered by the streams, who hast established the whole earth in the void above the waters, it was seized with great amazement' (ibid., O3, 297). In particular Christ's nakedness invokes surprise: 'How shall the streams of the river receive Thee, the unbearable fire that now approaches? How shall the angels of heaven look upon this stripping?' (Forefeast, O6, 307). Jordan must convince John to perform the baptism: 'Seeing Thee stripped naked, with fear Jordan said to him who had been born of a barren womb: "Suffer the Lord, who cleanses the whole creation by fire and Spirit, to be baptised, O John. For behold, for this cause He has come to sanctify the elements of earth and water"' (ibid., Exapostilarion, Slav practice, 310). The paradox of the Creator and ruler of creation submitting to baptism is stated repeatedly: 'For He who weighed the mountains in scales and the wooded valleys in a balance, who fills all things as God, is baptised by a servant' (Forefeast, Aposticha, 296). How can the Creator of heaven and earth appear naked: 'O compassionate Saviour, putting on the nakedness of Adam as a garment of glory, Thou makest ready to stand naked in the flesh in the river Jordan. O marvellous wonder! How shall the water receive Thee, O Master and Lord, who, as it is written, hast covered the roof of heaven with waters?' (Forefeast, Sessional Hymn, 303). Many Patristic homilies imagine similar dialogues. Romanos the Melodist, who especially stresses Christ's divinity in his many hymns, employs a question by John the Baptist, whom he portrays as very afraid of even touching Christ, as the refrain for his first hymn on Theophany: 'How would I baptise the inaccessible light?' (SC110:Hymn 16). John engages in a long dialogue with Christ before he is convinced to baptise him and even then does so only very reluctantly. Bulgakov also stresses the fear of creation in a homily on Theophany where he extensively reflects on the power of water (2008a:51).

As the waters are so visibly in terror of Christ's descending into them because they recognise his divinity, it is interesting that it is repeatedly stressed that Christ 'clothes' or 'wraps' himself in the waters of

the Jordan (as the quotes above already suggest, Christ is generally pictured naked and surrounded only by the water both by the liturgical texts and in the icons for Theophany): ‘For lo, He who once made the sacrifice of His righteous prophet burn most wondrously with water, wraps Himself in the waters of Jordan’ (Forefeast, Compline, O8, 301); ‘Thou who once hast clothed the shameful nakedness of our forefather Adam, art now of Thine own will stripped bare; and Thou who coverest the roof of heaven with waters, wrappest Thine own self in streams of Jordan, O Christ who alone art full of mercy’ (Forefeast, O3, 305),<sup>298</sup> ‘O Saviour, who clothest Thyself with light as with a garment, Thou hast clothed Thyself in the waters of Jordan’ (Theophany, Matins Stichera, 383). Proclus also mentions this in a homily that contrasts the Nativity with Theophany: ‘There he was laid down in a small cave and in a manger teaching us to be humble-minded,/but here he comes to that which is much greater, the river Jordan./There he was wrapped in poor and ragged swaddling-clothes,/but here he en clothed himself with the waters of Jordan’ (28.2, 130). Although the waters are afraid of the divinity of Christ, apparently Christ himself is not reluctant to clothe himself in the earthly water.

Again, the natural elements are not as visibly involved at the feast of the Transfiguration. Yet even there the liturgy sees the earth responding in fear to Christ: ‘The angels ministered in fear and trembling, the heavens shook and the earth quaked, as they beheld upon earth the Lord of glory’ (Stichera, 471). Nature worships Christ when he is transfigured within it: ‘The seasons [Slav: mountains] bowed down before Thy face: for at Thy feet the sun laid its light and its bright rays which fill the heavens, when Thou, O Christ, vouchsafed to change Thy mortal form’ (O5, 486). Basil of Seleucia begins his homily on the Transfiguration by depicting the abundant light of the sun that eclipses moon and stars and dispels darkness. He goes on to describe the Creator’s light seen here as far superior to the sun (Coune:93). He points out that the transfiguration takes place on a high mountain close to the clouds and interprets this as an image of the Parousia (Coune:95). Ignorant Peter is set straight by the noise of thunder. The whole earth and sky (and also the angels) respond to affirm Christ’s divinity (Coune:97). While Elias the Armenian does not explicitly say that the elements recognise Christ’s divinity, he does point out that Christ speaks to his creatures with great humility since they would otherwise ‘go to ruin before him’ (Coune:123). He suggests that if ocean animals had seen what the disciples saw they would have reacted far more strongly and says that the sun does indeed disappear before Christ’s glory (Coune:124).<sup>299</sup> Metropolitan Anthony in a homily on the Transfiguration affirms that ‘the Apostles saw the shining, they saw the divine light streaming through the transparent flesh of Christ, falling on all the things around Him, touching rock and plant, and calling out of them a response of light. They alone did not understand, because in all the created world man alone has sinned and is blind’ (19 Aug. 1990).<sup>300</sup> The creation responds to Christ in a way that we are unable to replicate. Yet the creation does

<sup>298</sup> If human nakedness is a result of the fall because the divine garments were lost (as is stressed repeatedly by the Lenten liturgies), one might suggest that this means that Christ takes on post-fall human condition, considering he here is repeatedly described as naked? Certainly Christ is pictured as dealing effectively with the consequences of sin by fully entering into their external condition represented by the polluted waters. This would be an interesting question to pursue further.

<sup>299</sup> Shortly after this he uses birds as an example to teach humans (Coune:124-25).

<sup>300</sup> Metropolitan Anthony’s homilies can be found on a website dedicated to them: [www.metropolit-anthony.orc.ru/eng/eng\\_serm.htm](http://www.metropolit-anthony.orc.ru/eng/eng_serm.htm).

not only recognise Christ as God, but his coming also has real effects for creatures. By his baptism and glorification, all of creation is hallowed and sanctified.

### 2.3 Sanctification

The most obvious aspect of Theophany is the sanctification of the waters. This is stated already in the Forefeast: ‘At Thine appearing in the body, the earth was sanctified, the waters blessed, the heaven enlightened, and mankind was set loose from the bitter tyranny of the enemy’ (Forefeast, Compline, O4, 298). At one point this hallowing of the waters is attributed to the Spirit: ‘The Spirit came down in the form of a dove to hallow the waters’ (Litya, 361). At Theophany itself the phrase ‘Today the nature of the waters is sanctified, and the Jordan is parted in two: it holds back the stream of its own waters, seeing the Master wash Himself’ is repeated several times (Sticheron, First Hour, 316; also at Great Blessing of Waters, 351-353). As in so many other feasts, this event is commemorated in anamnestic fashion: ‘Today (Σήμερον) the Master has come to sanctify the nature of the waters’ (O9, 381; ‘today’ is repeated as the first word six times). At one point an interesting connection to Christ’s nativity is made: ‘The earth has been sanctified, O Word, by Thy holy birth, and the heavens with the stars declared Thy glory: and now the nature of the waters is blessed by Thy baptism in the flesh, and mankind has been restored once more to its former nobility. Let the whole earth rejoice exceedingly, let heaven be glad, let the world leap for joy. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the springs and lakes and the deeps of the sea rejoice with them’ (Forefeast, Compline, O9, 302).<sup>301</sup> Christ’s sanctification of the waters at Theophany then makes it possible for the waters within and outside the church to be blessed and sanctified. The blessing of waters explicitly prays for the sanctification of the waters: ‘Do Thou Thyself, O Master, now as then sanctify (ἀγιάσον) this water by Thy Holy Spirit (3x)’ (Blessing at Vespers, 357).

Although the actual ceremonies of the blessings of water at Theophany are much later, Gregory Nazianzen in his homily on Theophany (‘On the Holy Lights’) already speaks of the ‘sanctification’ of the water: ‘In any case, John baptises; Jesus goes up to him—perhaps in order to sanctify the baptiser, but clearly in order to bury the whole of the old Adam in the water. But first of all, and for both their sakes, he goes up to sanctify the Jordan: as he was both spirit and flesh, he makes us perfect by the Spirit and water’ (39.15, Daley:135). Proclus also speaks explicitly of a blessing of waters in a homily on Theophany that sees it as superior even to the feast of the Nativity: ‘The past feast of the nativity of our great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ is glorious and precious,/ but more glorious and more precious is his present divine baptism... There blood was spilled,/here waters were blessed. ... There Bethlehem was then left childless,/but here the baptismal font has many children. ... but now the works of God are:’/“The sea clearly saw and fled,/The Jordan turned backwards./The mountains leapt like rams,/and the hills like the lambs of sheep” (Ps 113:3-4)’ (28.1-2, 129-130). Gregory even indicates that Christ’s baptism has implications for the whole world:

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<sup>301</sup> This might suggest that the Nativity sanctifies the earth, Theophany the water, the Ascension the air, and the Transfiguration the element of fire? This would mean that all four elements are sanctified at some point during the church year.

But now Jesus comes up out of the water. He brings the world up with him, and sees the heavens split open, which Adam caused to be closed for himself and those who came after him, just as paradise was closed by a flaming sword. And the Spirit bears witness to his divinity (for he comes to support the one like him); so does the voice from heaven (for the one to whom it bears witness comes from there); and the Spirit descends like a dove (for he pays honour to his body—since this, too, is God by divinisation—by being seen himself in bodily form). (39.16, Daley:136)

Gregory thus simultaneously affirms that Christ's baptism affects 'the whole world' and also 'pays honour to his body'.

Chrysostom brings the connotations of purification of the waters, recognition of Christ's divinity, and sanctification of the waters together by asking several rhetorical questions: 'The Jordan, seeing you, grew frightened and retreated, unable to endure the likeness of the divine fire, and does John dare to render service to you? The sea, seeing your divinity, fled into retreat, and does John dare to lay his right hand on your head? Do not, Lord, do not you approach your servant, but rather, Lord, baptise me—a sinner and one who has need of cleansing.' He envisions Christ responding as follows:

If you do not wash my body in the running waters of the Jordan, the mystery of the Trinity will not be manifested. If I do not descend into the Jordan, the Spirit will not be enkindled. If you do not sanctify the water of the Jordan, the head of the dragon will not be crushed. If you do not immerse my body in the river Jordan, the water of the sea will not be sanctified... For this reason I took on all flesh. For this reason I became one of my own creations. For all these reasons I was made manifest to the world. For these reasons I was seen 'in the likeness of a servant' (Phil 2:6). Take courage, then, and joyfully approach the undertaking.

Finally he depicts the results of this conversation: 'John was struck with terror. The Jordan was sanctified, while Christ, God of all, was baptised by John in the Jordan, sanctifying all nature' (cited in LP:183-84). Interestingly enough, John of Jerusalem speaks of the sanctification of the waters, which receive their sanctity from Christ, in a homily on the transfiguration (Coune:69). Clearly he sees some parallel between what happens on both occasions.

Argenti explicitly stresses that Christ 'renewed not only the nature of man, but the whole creation as well' (2006:137). He wonders whether we take this sanctification of matter sufficiently seriously: 'And when, at the feast of the Theophany, we drink the Holy Water in celebration of Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan, do we really believe that the Holy Spirit, in His sanctifying of the waters, also sanctifies all matter, renewing the whole creation? In short, is our faith in the Incarnation of the Word of God concretely expressed in our daily lives through our participation in these mysteries?' (138). Bulgakov in a homily on Theophany also stresses the activity of the Spirit: 'In the baptism of Christ, not only a small part of the Jordan, but the substance of all waters, is sanctified: The water received the One who cannot be encompassed and covered the One who is unapproachable. The waters received the incarnate Word, the Son of God, but they also received the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, sent by the Father: the purifying action of the entire Holy Trinity was accomplished here. The blessing of the Jordan was accomplished by the power, action, and inspiration of the Holy Spirit; and on this day the holy Church requests this same action upon the waters to be sanctified' (2008a:52). It is the Spirit who sanctifies the waters.

The liturgy for the Transfiguration also uses the language of sanctification. Here it is not only water that is sanctified but the whole earth: 'O God, who in Thy goodness hast sanctified (ἀγιάσας) with Thy light all the inhabited earth (τὴν οἰκουμένην), Thou wast transfigured upon a high mountain, showing Thy might

unto Thy disciples: for Thou dost redeem the world (κόσμον) from transgression. Therefore, we cry aloud to Thee: O Lord of compassion, save our souls' (Litya, 474). The Third Antiphon at the liturgy uses four psalm verses that recall other important mountains which were blessed by God's presence in some way (499). The mountain is repeatedly designated as 'holy'. Indeed, Elias, who says he has been there to visit the monks, says that the mountain is so holy and beautiful that all four-footed animals 'abstain absolutely' from going anywhere near it (presumably recalling Moses' warning to the Israelites and all their animals about approaching Sinai; Coune:136). In contrast to this an anonymous Georgian homily claims that animals are no longer chased away from this mountain (Coune:148). Apparently this homilist thinks of Christ's sanctification of the mountain as more inclusive (certainly than that at Moses' time). The most extensive praise of this mountain is probably by Anastasius of Sinai: 'It is in its honour that the mountains exult and the hills rejoice, it is due to this mountain that the valleys are covered in forests and the hollows adorn themselves with flowers, this is the one which the torrents [of water] decorate, which the streams cause to resonate, and which the lakes venerate, what makes the clouds resound and causes the birds to sing. This mountain is the zone of mysteries, the place of ineffable realities, the king of hidden secrets and the summit of the heavens' (Coune:153). Besides these references to the mountain as holy, the liturgy also engages in an activity of sanctification by blessing grapes (and other fruit) at the Transfiguration (502-503).

## 2.4 Rejoicing

As at many of the other feasts, the liturgy of Theophany affirms that all of creation rejoices at these feasts: 'O earth and things upon the earth, dance ye and rejoice exceedingly. The River of joy is baptised in the stream: He dries up the fount of evil and pours forth divine remission' (Forefeast, Aposticha, 295). The Jordan and its surroundings are specifically named: 'Rejoice O wilderness of Jordan; dance with gladness, O ye mountains. For the eternal Life has come to call back Adam' (ibid.). The wilderness is turned into a garden: 'Let the desert of Jordan rejoice exceedingly and blossom as the lily' (ibid., 296). This is further emphasised by the first reading at the first hour, which employs the text from Isaiah 35:1-10 about the wilderness rejoicing and the desert blooming (317-18).

Not only does the Jordan rejoice, but such happiness is also attributed to the clouds: 'Christ comes to baptism; Christ approaches Jordan; Christ now buries our sins in the waters, for He is good... Let the clouds, rejoicing, drop down eternal gladness. Jesus Christ comes forth to drown the rivers of sin in the streams of Jordan, granting enlightenment to all' (Forefeast, O1, 304). Humans also join in this rejoicing in imagery drawn from nature: 'Let the whole nature of man make glad, that formerly was barren as the wilderness and thirsty. The River of joy has now appeared in the waters of Jordan, setting loose the drought of sin' (Forefeast, O4, 306). The Jordan leaps and dances: 'Let the wilderness of Jordan blossom with flowers; and ye that lie in darkness, leap for joy, for a great light has now appeared to you... Be glad now and dance, O Jordan; leap for joy, O John, and let the whole inhabited earth rejoice exceedingly' (Forefeast, O9, 310). The description becomes the most vivid at the prayers for the blessing of the waters. Moon, stars, and seasons praise God and indeed all of creation joins this song:

Of four elements hast Thou compounded the creation: with four seasons hast Thou crowned the circuit of the year. All the spiritual powers tremble before Thee. The sun sings Thy praises; the moon glorifies Thee; the stars supplicate before Thee; the light obeys Thee; the deeps are afraid at Thy presence; the fountains are Thy servants. Thou hast stretched out the heavens like a curtain; Thou hast established the earth upon waters; Thou hast walled about the sea with sand. Thou hast poured forth the air that living things may breathe... At Thine Epiphany the whole creation sang Thy praises. For Thou, our God, hast appeared on earth and dwelt among men, Thou hast sanctified the streams of Jordan, sending down from on high the most Holy Spirit, and Thou hast broken the heads of the dragons therein. (Prayer at Great Blessing, 356)

Of the Patristic homilists Proclus is again the most vivid in his description of the participation of all of creation at Theophany:

Christ has appeared to the world,/and having adorned the unadorned world, he filled it with radiant joy./He took upon him the sin of the world/and overthrew the enemy of the world./He sanctified the fountains of the waters,/and enlightened people's souls./Miracles were joined to greater miracles./For today the earth and the sea share in the grace of the Saviour,/and all the world has been filled (full) with joy./And the feast of today points to the increase in the miracles, greater than the preceding feast./For in the preceding feast of the nativity of the Saviour the earth rejoiced,/because it was bearing in the manger the Lord of all;/but in today's feast of the epiphany of God the sea is extremely glad,/and it rejoices because it partakes, through the river Jordan, of the blessings of sanctification ... There he was bound in the bonds of swaddling-clothes,/here he unbinds the bonds of our sins./There the King put on the purple robe of the body, here the Source puts on the river. (7.1, 125)

He employs the verse from Psalm 117:26 as a refrain in this hymn of praise:

Come then, observe incredible wonders:/"the sun of righteousness" (Mal 4:2) being washed in the Jordan,/and fire being baptised in water,/and God being sanctified by a man./Today the whole creation sings hymns of praise:/"*Praised is the one who is coming in the name of the Lord*"./Praised is the one who is always coming,/for he came now not for the first time./"*Praised is the one who is coming in the name of the Lord*"./The one who is coming with providence also through things created,/preserving intact the grandeur of heaven,/dexterously steering the course of the sun,/commanding without confusion the multitude of stars,/mixing with firm hand the air to be breathed,/warming again with firm hand the inmost parts of the earth to bear fruit,/controlling the many-waved sea with the smallest grain of sand,/invisibly letting fountains gush forth from the depths,/unerringly guiding the courses of rivers./Looking then at all these things, let us say:/"*Praised is the one who is coming in the name of the Lord*"! (7.2, 126)

Bulgakov in his homily on Theophany also describes this: 'This day the waters shine and sparkle. This day they have a perfect transparency. This day we hear their sweet gurgling. This day the thirsty desert rejoices. This day the rain comes down from heaven and gives drink to the earth, in order that the latter give birth. This day the dry lips are moistened' (2008a:54).<sup>302</sup> Thus various elements of creation are taken to respond explicitly to the feast.

This theme is also present in the Patristic homilies on the Transfiguration. Anastasius of Sinai speaks repeatedly and vividly of such rejoicing at the Transfiguration: 'Today Tabor and Hermon exult together and

<sup>302</sup> In the context of his hymns on virginity, Ephrem collects several references to nature in the New Testament and vividly describes their response to Christ: 'The sea has crowned You with the catch it offered You,/it twined together all kinds of fish, and offered them to You like flowers,/it filled two boats full as a symbol, heaping them up;/the apostles' net, with the symbol of the 150 fish,/resembles the harp of the prophets/which wove the plaited crown/of the 150 psalms. The sea, stretched out, became a spotless plain/on whose sparkling surface the Pure One walked./The sea entwined its waves as a crown for God,/it beheld Him walking on the water, and made haste to crown Him,/it escorted Him in triumph over its deeps,/handing Him over to its neighbour, the dry land./The dry land emulated the sea in exalting Him. For You a delightful path has been cleared in the sea,/and on the dry land too a bright path has been prepared./Before the feet of our Lord the sea evened out its waves,/in rivalry the dry land strewed garments before Him./The waves beheld You and lay themselves flat,/the garments too beheld You and spread themselves out:/both waves and garments pay honour to You! To You both land and sea are harnessed, and they escort You/acting as a mighty chariot that is harnessed without a yoke./The band of demons that roams about on land saw it/and fled into the swine to hide, but they did not escape:/the land rejoiced at their ignominy,/the sea leapt in joy at their disgrace;/both height and depth beheld their destruction' (33.7-11, 1983:54-55).

invite the entire universe to joy, and the land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, exposed to the rays of the sun, have sung and performed a choir in unison. It is today that Galilee and Nazareth have danced together and enriched the feast by choirs, that Tabor rejoices in the feast and guides the entire recreated creation toward God' (Coune:154). A little later he outlines this rejoicing again in great detail, listing various aspects of non-human and human nature indiscriminately: 'In learning of its transformation from corruption to incorruption, the creation rejoiced, the mountain exulted, the fields shuddered with joy, the villages rendered glory, the nations came running, the peoples boasted, the seas made their hymn heard, the rivers applauded, Nazareth jubilated, Babylon sang a hymn, Naphtali made a feast, the hills jumped, the deserts flourished, the paths made gifts and all things met together and rejoiced together' (Coune:163). Indeed, he has the river Jordan, the sea of Tiberias, and the whole earth dance with the stars and the mountains and the seas (Coune:164). John of Damascus also says that Tabor 'jubilates and rejoices'. Indeed, the mountain 'dances and rejoices' in imitation of skipping rams. 'This is the joy of the entire creation' (Coune:190). At both Theophany and the Transfiguration all of creation exults and rejoices. The natural order participates actively in the liturgical praise.

## 2.5 Transformation

The sanctification of the waters and the earth leads to their transformation or transfiguration. At times this transformation seems to apply only to humans in the liturgical texts: 'Through the Spirit dost Thou make souls new and through the water dost Thou sanctify our body compounded from the elements, forming man afresh as a living being' (Forefeast, Compline, O5, 299). Yet in other places the waters, and indeed the whole creation, are themselves affirmed to be transformed:

Today the Sun that never sets has risen and the world is filled with splendour by the light of the Lord. Today the moon shines upon the world with the brightness of its rays. Today the glittering stars make the inhabited earth fair with the radiance of their shining. Today the clouds drop down upon mankind the dew of righteousness from on high. Today the Uncreated of His own will accepts the laying on of hands from His own creature. Today the Prophet and Forerunner approaches the Master, but stands before Him with trembling, seeing the condescension of God towards us. *Today the waters of the Jordan are transformed* (μεταποιείται) into healing by the coming of the Lord. *Today the whole creation* ('ἡ κτίσις) *is watered* by mystical streams. Today the transgressions of men are washed away by the waters of the Jordan. Today Paradise has been opened to men and the Sun of Righteousness shines down upon us. (Prayer at Great Blessing, Greek practice, 354; emphasis mine)<sup>303</sup>

Christ 'saves the creation (ἐκσωάζει τὴν κτίσιν)' (O4, 371) and 'delivers the world from corruption (ἐκ φθορᾶς τὸν κόσμον λυπούμενος)' (O6, 373). Indeed, 'the creation finds itself set free' (O8, 378). This is put again in the language of healing and restoration: 'Thou, O our Saviour, wast baptised in Jordan and hast sanctified the waters: accepting a servant's hand upon Thine head, Thou healest the passions of the world' (Praises, 382). The sanctification of the waters thus makes possible the healing of the whole world.

Proclus also seems to apply Christ's work at the Theophany primarily to humans although he appeals to creation even in this focus on humans:

And he 'who bowed the heavens' (Ps 17:9), bows his head,/in order that he may restore our fallen nature./And he who created lakes and fountains and depths,/caused the turbid waters of mortals; disbelief to dry up./And the

<sup>303</sup> The word 'today' is used at the beginning of the sentence more than two dozen times in this prayer alone.



spiritual sun is being illuminated,/in order that he may break the drought of our sin./And he who is present everywhere, and holds the universe in his hand,/appears in a river,/in order that he may wash away the rivers of our sins./And he is stripped naked on account of us, the naked ones,/in order that he may clothe all in a robe of incorruption. (28.3, 132)

Yet, later he does speak of an illumination of all creation: ‘Beloved, you have also heard the Lord calling us./Let us therefore follow him from now on zealously./Quickly, brothers and sisters, quickly!/For the whole of creation is illuminated today,/and the universe is glad and full of joy’ (28.6, 135). Bulgakov stresses the cosmic elements of Theophany more fully while also emphasising the eschatological character of this feast: ‘Does not the Psalmist summon even inanimate nature to praise the Lord (Ps. 148)? Does not the prophet (Daniel) summon all of creation to praise and glorify the Lord? This day does not the Holy Church attest: “The sun praises Thee, the moon glorifies Thee, the abysses tremble before Thee, the sources work for Thee”? And thus the watery element, receiving the action of the Holy Spirit, becomes a spirit-bearing matter; and the partaking of it is called a kind of “communion”.’ He claims that this has eschatological implications: ‘The sanctification of the waters is a mysterious anticipation of the life of the future age, when God will be all in all. This is the water of the future age, the source of “the water of life” (Rev. 21:6), from the river of living water, radiant as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb’ (2008a:53).<sup>304</sup> Argenti in commenting more generally on the significance of baptism also refers to the ‘renewal of the whole world’: ‘Mission is not only a matter of communication, but also of action through which the Holy Spirit will transform the world and the whole creation—yes, the *whole* creation. And in this understanding of salvation lies the correct understanding of mission.’ He goes on to speak of this in terms of baptism: ‘When a Baptism is celebrated in the Orthodox Church (and this has been the case since the beginning of the Church), we begin by asking the Holy Spirit to come and sanctify the waters. The catechumen, having renounced Satan and professed his faith, is then immersed in the waters. His whole life enters into the death of Christ so that he may participate in His Resurrection, and be joined to Him as “one plant”. Baptism, then, is the rebirth of man, but this rebirth also belongs to the new birth of the whole creation, the renewal of the whole world’ (2006:198). He explicitly connects it to what he calls ‘Orthodox ecology’:

The Holy Spirit is called down upon the bread and the wine so that all who partake of them might receive the fullness of the Kingdom of Heaven, that the universe in its entirety, transformed and transfigured, may become God’s Kingdom. The eucharistic mystery, then, is the space in which the whole fallen world dies and rises with Christ, and becomes His Body, the Kingdom of God. The universe is subjected to the Son of God, Who subjects it, together with Himself, to God the Father so that God may be all in all. And that is Orthodox ecology. (2006:254)

Although he does not go on to spell out what such an ecology might imply, the reference is consistent with his repeated emphasis on concern for the world.

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<sup>304</sup> He does, however, interpret the sanctification of the waters in terms of their benefit for humans: ‘This is the spiritual element of the new heaven and the new earth, the kingdom of the future age. There is no limit to the all-penetrating action of the Holy Spirit, just as there is no boundary that separates man from the cosmic elements; for man himself is the living centre of these elements, and all of them form, as it were, his external, extended body. Man himself is sanctified by the sanctification of the waters, for it was for human salvation that the Son of God became incarnate and unalterably became man, the Son of God who was baptised in the Jordan; and it is for the sake of man that the sanctification of the waters is accomplished’ (2008a:53). I will return again to Bulgakov’s vision of eschatology at the end of this chapter.

The feast of the Transfiguration, of course, speaks even more explicitly of transformation since that is its central theme.<sup>305</sup> At first such transfiguration again seems primarily applied to humans: ‘For in His mercy the Saviour of our souls has transfigured disfigured man and made him shine with light upon Mount Tabor’ (Stichera, 468). Yet while here only humans seem to be ‘transfigured’, the mountain itself is designated as holy: ‘Shining forth with the light of the virtues, let us set foot on the holy mountain that we may gaze upon the divine Transfiguration of the Lord’ (Aposticha, 469). And this holiness is indeed a result of a transformation: ‘The mountain that was once gloomy and veiled in smoke has now become venerable and holy, since Thy feet, O Lord, have stood upon it’ (Stichera, 471). At Matins human theosis and the ‘splendour of creation’ are affirmed together: ‘When the infinite Light that knows no evening, even the brightness of the Father that gives splendour to creation, ineffably appeared in unapproachable glory on Mount Tabor, it made men godlike as they sang: “O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord”’ (O8, 491). John Damascene similarly affirms the mountains as ‘divine and holy’, full ‘of glory and splendour’ in his homily on the Transfiguration. Indeed, ‘it rivals in grace with the heavens’ (Coune:190). Anastasius of Sinai explicitly speaks of the transfiguration of nature: ‘It is today on Mount Tabor that he has renewed and transformed earthly beauty into heavenly beauty, and this is why I say it again because it is true and entirely natural: This place is venerable; it is nothing less than the house of God and the door to heaven’ (Coune:154). He comes back to this theme several times. After depicting the rejoicing of all of creation in colourful detail he speaks directly to Christ as ‘Creator of all things’ who has ‘transfigured the entire creation in your image and who has recreated it in a marvellous fashion’ (Coune:163). After this he adds another hymn of praise of all of creation that specifically lists many different creatures (at least the fourth one in this homily).

Homilies for the Transfiguration contain much eschatological imagery. In the ‘Apocalypse of Peter’ Christ gives the disciples a vision of Paradise open with the tree flourishing within it (Coune:4). John of Jerusalem speaks of Tabor as an imitation of heaven (Coune:66). Such apocalyptic imagery is particularly strong in Anastasius of Sinai.<sup>306</sup> Palamas, for obvious reasons, stresses this eschatological dimension especially and links it to the vision of the uncreated light (Coune:239-256). Bulgakov, in a homily on the Transfiguration (similar to his homily on Theophany), also highlights the eschatological character of the feast: ‘But what new thing, what thing which had never before existed in the world, was revealed here on Mount Tabor? What was it that was witnessed by this mountain, and by the air, by the earth and the sky, by the universe, by Christ’s dumbfounded disciples? What was this light which illuminated the apostles?’ He answers: ‘This was clearly an action of the Holy Spirit, reposing upon Christ and, in Him, transfiguring

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<sup>305</sup> Georges Habra argues that it is not Christ who is transfigured on the mountain but solely the vision of the disciples. It ‘consists in a certain mystical perception of the divinity of Christ beyond the veil of the flesh’ (1973:47). This is also what Gregory Palamas contends (Triads III.15, Gendle:76). Yet, while we (and the whole creation) are indeed also transformed in and by Christ’s transfiguration, the liturgical (like the biblical) texts explicitly speak of *Christ’s* transfiguration (as a real event) and not merely of a mystical vision of the disciples. Both themes are present in the texts.

<sup>306</sup> Unfortunately Anastasius, who speaks so beautifully of the transformation and rejoicing of nature at the transfiguration, goes on to exhort his audience to ‘be transported beyond the world, separate from the earth, leave behind the flesh, abandon the creation’ and praises Peter for a vision of ‘incorporeal ideas’ and the ‘absence of passion’ which leads to immortality (Coune:157). However shortly after this he goes back to speaking of transformation of creation, including mountains and fields.

creation. This was a preliminary manifestation of “the new heaven and the new earth”, of a world transfigured and illuminated by beauty. This was, like the Epiphany, a revelation of the entire Holy Trinity—of the Father, who sent down His Spirit upon His Beloved Son and, in Him, upon all creatures’ (2008a:140). He draws an explicit connection to the ‘uncreated light’ experienced by the hesychasts (ibid.). In his view this light of Tabor shows that the transfiguration has already penetrated the world. It anticipates the final transfiguration which is effected both through Christ and the Spirit. He holds in tension both ‘already’ and ‘not yet’: ‘The Holy Spirit descended into the world, and the glorification of the world has already been accomplished, although it has not yet been manifested. However, in the light of Tabor this authentic future form of the world is revealed to the chosen as if in a flash of lightening. The world is present before us in its transfigured state’ (2008a:141). The Transfiguration then previews the transformation of the entire world through the activity of the Spirit.

## 2.6 Cosmic dimension of liturgy

What is often called the ‘cosmic dimension’ of the Orthodox liturgy is thus particularly obvious in these feasts of Theophany and of the Transfiguration. All of creation is sanctified and hallowed by Christ’s baptism and glorification.<sup>307</sup> The whole cosmos is affected by Christ’s work. Bulgakov stresses this already in a very early book on Orthodox faith. Although this is a fairly long citation it brings together well the various aspects usually implied by speaking of the cosmic ‘dimension’ of Orthodoxy.<sup>308</sup>

One trait of the Orthodox Office must be noted particularly—that is its cosmic quality. It is addressed not only to the human soul but to all creation, and it sanctifies the latter. This sanctification of the elements of nature and of different objects expresses the idea that the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit is extended by the Church over all nature. The destiny of nature is allied to that of man; corrupted because of man, she awaits with him her healing. On the other hand, Our Lord, having taken on Himself true humanity, has joined His life to all of nature. He walked on this earth, He looked at its flowers and its plants, its birds, its fish, its animals, He ate of its fruits. He was baptised in the water of Jordan, He walked on its waters, He rested in the womb of the earth, and there is nothing in all creation (outside of evil and sin) which remains foreign to His humanity.

Here the incarnation is interpreted as an affirmation of the material world which is sanctified and healed through Christ’s activity. Bulgakov sees liturgical actions as confirmation of this:

So the Church blesses all creation; it blesses the flowers, the plants, the branches brought to the Church for the Feast of the Holy Trinity, the fruits brought for that of the Transfiguration; certain foods are blessed during the night before Easter; different places and objects, according to particular needs. Among these special services we must note the solemn consecration of a church by which it becomes a place worthy of the service of the Office and of the divine Eucharist, as well as the offices for the sanctification of the different objects of the cult, vestments, vessels, bells, etc. The Church also blesses the chrism for the sacrament of Confirmation and oil for many needs, the Eucharist bread (‘prosphora’) and the extra-liturgical bread, the wine, etc. The benediction of waters happens on the eve of the Feast of the Epiphany and on the day of that feast. It can be performed, however,

<sup>307</sup> Constantin Galeriu also points out that matter participates in the transfiguration, that everything is changed: ‘This is the reason why there is a profound and indestructible relationship between the transfiguration of the human being by Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit and the transfiguration of nature’ (in Triacca & Pistoia, 1998:86). He also argues that ‘the transfiguration of nature, of the creation, integrally spirit and matter, soul and body, perpetual fruit of the Transfiguration of Christ, constitutes the response that Revelation, the Church gives to the sadness and the tragic degradation of our secular cosmos’ (ibid., 91).

<sup>308</sup> Evdokimov also stresses this theme in his introduction to Orthodoxy (1959:202-215). He interprets the bringing of food to the church for blessing (at the Transfiguration and Pascha) in a eucharistic fashion (203). His description of liturgical prayer here is very similar to the passage quoted from Bulgakov above.

at any time at the request of anyone, and the water may be drunk or used to sprinkle holy objects and places. The rite sanctifies the aquatic element in general.

He argues that ‘the meaning and the foundation of all these rites is that they both precede and prepare the new creature, the transfiguration of all creation, “the new earth and the new heaven”. Rationalism easily discovers “magic” here, or pagan superstition, because it seems to confine the force of Christianity to the limits of the spiritual world of man. But man is a spirit incarnated, a cosmic being: the cosmos lives in him, it is sanctified in him, for the Lord is not only Saviour of souls, but of bodies also, and consequently of the entire world.’

Bulgakov links this sanctification explicitly to the activity of the Spirit in the world:

Hence the cosmic quality of the Orthodox office expresses that fullness of Christianity, and the Lord who sanctified the earth and the waters of the Jordan continues to bless them by His Spirit present in the Church. From this it is clear that the sanctification of nature is allied to the sanctification of the spirit. We become sanctified ourselves when we eat a holy substance. In the Eucharist the matter of the world is sanctified by becoming the Body and Blood of Christ, and it is given to us to be in communion with Him. But the elements used in the Eucharist form part of the whole world of matter, and its sanctification by what may well be called a renewed Incarnation of God implies all previous blessings which are but inferior degrees of the same. (1935:157-59)

Thus liturgical actions have a sanctifying effect on the material creation through the activity of the Spirit.

While this is beautiful language, Bulgakov does not draw any explicit conclusions about our relations to other creatures from this cosmic dimension. Nor does he make very clear in what this sanctification of nature actually consists. In this he is followed by his French translator Andronikof who persistently employs the words ‘cosmic liturgy’ in his treatment of the major feasts, yet never explains what this is actually supposed to mean.<sup>309</sup>

In fact, many contemporary Orthodox thinkers draw especially on the blessing of waters at Theophany for their comments about the ecological potential of Orthodoxy. It has become one of the most popular liturgical images for Orthodox attitudes to creation. Patriarch Bartholomew links Theophany and the Transfiguration explicitly in a chapter on creation (2008:93). Theokritoff also mentions Theophany a couple of times in her chapter on liturgy, where she stresses that we join the rest of creation in its praise and indeed learn from it (2009:166; also 175-176). For Guroian it serves as the main example of blessing in his chapter

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<sup>309</sup> When explaining the ‘meaning of the liturgy’ Andronikof refers to the liturgy as ‘a cosmic epiphany’ which is ‘sufficiently indicated’ by the reading of psalm 104 (the creation psalm read at the beginning of vespers). Shortly after this comment he says that the liturgy ‘reestablishes the order of creation’ (1988:10, 12). In a later chapter on ‘heaven and earth’ he examines the angelic world in great detail, but says nothing about any earthly creatures besides humans. The ‘angelic world is the “paradigm” for the terrestrial world’ (217). In his book on the fixed cycle he claims that the liturgy has importance for liberating the universe: ‘The cosmos is liturgically sanctified by the grace which descends on humans... this is the meaning of the blessing, which is sanctification, of nature and of the world effected by the liturgy’ (1970:16). Although he affirms a sanctification of the cosmos here, it is focused on humans and seems to have no real implications for the rest of creation. Liturgy is essentially ‘theanthropy’ (47). His reflection on Theophany speaks repeatedly of water as ‘cosmic principle’, of the ‘cosmic sense of the feast’, of ‘sanctified matter’, of ‘remaking of the cosmos’ and ‘reintegration of the cosmos into the kingdom’ (1970:175-220), but draws implications only for human deification and liberation. He goes furthest in the final lines of his treatment of the movable cycle of feasts: ‘Jerusalem designates the infinite abode of God among humans in the cosmos transfigured for eternity, [it is] the historical and symbolic archetype of the Church and of all the churches, of Rome, of Byzantium, of Moscow and of Paris, of Tokyo and of New York, of the cities and countrysides of the entire world’ (1985:318). Again ‘cosmic’ here seems to mean primarily all people not nature as a whole. Ossorguine, conversely, seems positively obsessed with the ‘cosmic dimension’ of the liturgy. Basically every presentation he has given at the annual liturgical conferences at St. Sergius focuses on this topic. He interprets it primarily in terms of a lunar-solar cyclical influence on the liturgical year that

on ecological ethics. He insists that ‘there is no human salvation apart from the cleansing and restoration to health of the whole creation’ (1994:167). Unlike Theokritoff, however, who stresses the example set for us by creation, Guroian focuses more on the human activity of blessing: ‘Planetary waters are scarcely fit symbols of life and renewal when they are filled with deadly chemicals. It would be inappropriate to offer a dirtied and polluted world back to God in thanksgiving for his divine love. The vocation of the apostles includes being healers and “cleansers of the whole world”’ (1994:167). He comments on the Armenian blessings of fields: ‘Orthodox theology insists that the Incarnation does not concern merely the correction of something that has gone wrong. Rather, it completes God’s purpose at creation. It is about the flourishing of all life’ (171). Juxtaposing the imagery of Noah’s ark to that of the animals at the manger he describes the tasks of the church in terms of hospitality and blessing: ‘The church as God’s vehicle for taking humanity into the new creation is a household that, like the ark before it, embraces in hospitality, thanksgiving, and blessing all living creatures’ (173). Guroian’s interpretation of blessing, while seeking to be inclusive of all of creation, highlights some of the problems already considered in chapter two, namely the strong focus on humans as the main actors in the relationship between God and creation. This anthropocentric focus takes on a larger dimension in the central themes of Theophany and of the Transfiguration. What, then, are the concrete implications for all of creation of the sanctification effected by Theophany and the transformation in the Transfiguration? The theological goal for humans is clear: theosis. Do all creatures come to share in this deification or is it a purely human goal?

### 3. Ecological implications

Theosis is *the* aim of the Christian life in the Orthodox tradition and is closely associated with the imagery of the transfiguration (already before, but far more strongly since the Palamite controversy). It is the explicit goal of the ascetic life briefly examined in the previous chapter. Yet, as some of this literature has already suggested, often theosis is portrayed as a purely spiritual goal that seems to have little connection to our physical reality. And it is also seen almost exclusively as a *human* goal, acquired through the virtues and contemplative prayer. As other creatures are thought to have no will, theosis is apparently irrelevant for them. Yet if theosis encapsulates redemption, sanctification, and final (eschatological) transfiguration, does this imply that only humans are redeemed and that they are the only ones who enter ‘heaven’? Certainly that seems to be the unstated implication of many accounts that only consider human futures when speaking of theosis and eschaton. Is theosis meant for all of creation and if so how?

#### 3.1 Theosis: Denial of creaturehood?

Conradie strongly criticises the notion of theosis because he finds that it portrays eschatological redemption ‘as redemption from creaturehood’. After quoting from Clement and Athanasius he concludes that their vision ‘can only be understood as an eschatological denial of creaturehood’ (2005a:162). Instead he

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alternates between day and night or light and darkness, respectively. For one example that summarises most of the earlier

prefers ‘a notion of the eschaton which can radically affirm that which is material, temporal, bodily and earthly’ (166). Indeed at times one does get the impression in some Patristic writers that they have a lingering Platonic desire to be freed from their bodies and leave all corporeal things behind entirely. Gregory Nazianzen expresses some of this ambivalence about the body strikingly:

How I am connected to this body, I do not know, nor do I understand how I can be an image of God, and still be mingled with this filthy clay; when it is in good condition, it wars against me, and when it is itself under attack, it causes me grief! I love it as my fellow servant, but struggle against it as an enemy; I flee it as something enslaved, just as I am, but I show it reverence as called, with me, to the same inheritance. I long that it be dissolved, and yet I have no other helper to use in striving for what is best, since I know what I was made for, and know that I must ascend towards God through my actions. (14.6, Daley:79)

Although he goes on in the rest of this homily on leprosy to exhort his congregation to care for mutilated bodies (which he describes in compassionate terms) based on Christ’s descent into the body, his own reluctance to embrace this body is often expressed in his homilies and poetry. In a different homily his language is much stronger: ‘For nothing seems so important to me as for a person to shut off his senses, to take his place outside the flesh and the world—not to fasten on human realities unless it is completely necessary, and so, in conversation with himself and with God, to live above the level of the visible, and always to bear the images of divine things within himself in their pure state, free from the stamp of what is inferior and changeable’ (20.1, Daley:98). Indeed he counsels ‘putting to death my earthly members, and treating this lowly body as a foolish thing’ (20.4, Daley:100). Similar disparaging remarks about the body abound throughout the tradition.

It is striking that an appreciation of the beauty of creation and a rejection of the things of the senses and the material world in general can often be found closely together. Maximus the Confessor, for example, who speaks so beautifully of our ability to discern the *logoi* of creation, at the same time is quite dismissive of the material as one ascends in spiritual knowledge. In his reflection on the transfiguration (Amb.10.17, Louth:108-110), he interprets the story of the transfiguration as an illumination of the disciples that enables them to understand (‘spiritually’) the hidden *logoi* of things: ‘And they [the disciples] passed over from flesh to spirit, before they had put aside this fleshly life, by the change in their powers of sense that the Spirit worked in them, lifting the veils of the passions from the intellectual activity that was in them. Then, having both their bodily and the spiritual senses purified, they were taught the spiritual meanings [*logoi*] of the mysteries that were shown to them. They were taught hiddenly that the all-blessed radiance that shone resplendently from his face, as it overpowered the sight of the eyes, was a symbol of His divinity that transcends mind and sense and being and knowledge’ (10.17, 109). Similarly, when we ascend ‘the mountain of the divine Transfiguration’, we also will be able to ‘behold the garments of the Word, by which I mean the words of Scripture, and the manifestation of creatures, which are radiant and glorious by the dogmas that penetrate them, rendered splendid by the divine Word for exalted contemplation’ (10.18, 112). He pictures this enlightenment and contemplation in purely intelligible terms, ‘the power of the senses within us being completely extinguished’, and insists ‘that the excellence of the Saints in everything’ consists in ‘their genuine

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presentations, see 1993:243-251.

separation from the flesh and matter'. Indeed, 'they do not acquire the blessed knowledge of God only by sense and appearances and forms, using letters and syllables, which lead to mistakes and bafflement over the judgement of truth, but *solely by the mind*, rendered most pure and released from all material mists' (10.30, 128; emphasis mine). In order to be united to God, one must transcend and indeed abandon the senses: 'When they have completely shaken off the senses and everything perceived through them by means of the activity that relates and inclines it to them, their soul can be ineffably assimilated to God by means of the mind alone, and wholly united to him alone ineffably, so that possessing the image of the archetype according to the likeness in mind and reason and spirit, they can behold the resemblance so far as possible, and learn in a hidden manner the unity understood in the Trinity' (10.43, 147). For Maximus, then, the transfiguration which unites us with God apparently has no place for the body, the senses, or the material world.<sup>310</sup> The role of deification and spiritual enlightenment in the Eastern tradition is hence indeed ambivalent.

Yet, at other times such stress on a purely spiritual or mental union with the divine is balanced by more tempered statements. Both Maximus and John Damascene affirm that soul and body always go together and that one cannot be without the other, either in this or the next life. Maximus says that 'soul and body are indissolubly understood to be parts of the whole human species. Soul and body came into being at the same moment and their essential difference from each other in no way whatsoever impairs the logoi that inhere naturally and essentially in them. For that reason it is inconceivable to speak of the soul and body except in relation to each other... the relation between them is immutable' (Amb.7, Blowers:74-74). John points out that 'the soul is united with the body, the entire soul with the entire body and not part for part' (I.13:198).<sup>311</sup> He is also emphatic that deification does not erase the body or the flesh even in Christ. In regard to the ascension he says: 'just as we confess that the Incarnation was brought about without transformation or change, so also do we hold that the deification of the flesh was brought about. For the Word neither overstepped the bounds of His own divinity nor the divine prerogatives belonging to it just because He was made flesh; and, when the

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<sup>310</sup> Similar affirmations of the spiritual life—or theosis specifically—as consisting in an abandonment of the senses and the material world in favour of a focus on the mind and the spiritual alone can be found in many other authors, such as in the poetry of Symeon the New Theologian, which speaks powerfully of the soul's love for God, but has almost no consideration of anything material or bodily. Although he often stresses human creaturehood, it is almost always to show the despicability of our state in comparison to God's overwhelming glory (or to stress the divine kenosis which takes on human flesh). It might be important to draw a distinction between spiritual writings (such as those collected in the *Philokalia*) and more theological explications. Spiritual writings assume a clear pattern of the three-fold path of purification, illumination, and contemplation fairly soon and employ language that suggests erasure or at least subduing of passions and focus on 'theoria' (contemplative prayer of the mind). They also develop out of a Hellenistic environment (predominantly Platonic but influenced also by Aristotelianism and Stoicism) that perceives immutability and impassibility as preeminent divine attributes (change and passions are therefore 'bad') and understands rightly ordered life as the soul's control over the body. This becomes the standard and accepted language and subsequent writers thus come to put their own spiritual experiences into these expected terms. Theological (or even apologetic) writings that set reflections on human nature and of redemption within the context of other theological doctrines, such as the incarnation, are often more careful and balanced in their exposition. Homiletic literature often straddles this divide in the sense that it is addressed to people involved in the cares of their concrete physical lives while also exhorting them to imitate the spiritual visions presented by the monastic and ascetic examples.

<sup>311</sup> Palamas also stresses this: 'The soul therefore as it sustains the body together with which it was created is everywhere in the body, not as in a place, nor as if it were encompassed, but as sustaining, encompassing and giving life to it because it possesses this too in the image of God' (Chap. 61, 155). He makes a distinction, however, between animal and human souls, inasmuch as the former perish with the body (Chap. 31, 115) and the latter is immortal (Chap. 32, 117).

flesh was made divine, it certainly did not change its own nature or its natural properties' (III.17:316-317). He goes on to stress that the 'properties of the flesh' remain unimpaired even after Christ's return to the Father. In a later section he affirms that Christ 'sits corporeally with His flesh glorified together with Him, for He and His flesh are adored together with one adoration by all creation' (IV.2:336). When commenting on the popular 'exchange' of the incarnation (God became human so we might become divine), John insists repeatedly that we speak of the 'deification of the flesh' (IV.18:379). In the entire section the flesh is prominent. Near the end of his summary of the faith he clearly affirms a corporeal resurrection of real physical bodies and rejects any interpretation that focuses solely on the soul (IV.27:401-406). Gregory Palamas who justifies the hesychast method of prayer for achieving theosis repeatedly claims that such prayer affirms the body. He rejects 'the heretics, who claim that the body is an evil thing, a fabrication of the Wicked One' (I.ii.1:41). He deals with several biblical passages that seem to imply a negative view of the body or the flesh and concludes that these do 'not say that the flesh is evil, but what inhabits it' and repeatedly speaks of 'deified flesh' (e.g. II.iii.20, 63).<sup>312</sup> And indeed, if theosis really is an 'exchange' with the incarnation, as most writers affirm, it cannot be thought without it. Just as Christ did not cease to be divine when he became flesh, so we cannot be thought to lose or deny our flesh in the process of deification.

Furthermore, theosis is usually thought in the context of the fall which is frequently interpreted as a turning away from God in order to focus solely on material matters.<sup>313</sup> Thus deification comes to mean a turning away from such false (exclusive) focus on the material towards God and spiritual matters. This can easily lead to language that seems to denigrate the material world. Yet such language must always be read in the context of the more general affirmation of the goodness of creation. John Damascene repeatedly stresses God's working in all of creation and sees the harmony and beauty of creation as supreme evidence for God (I.3:169).<sup>314</sup> He engages in a long analysis of creation, including its divisions, its elements, its humours, its winds, its geographical regions, and the make-up of the human body and the faculties of the soul, relying on much of the prevalent knowledge about the natural world (most of Book II). God is intimately involved in creation: 'God provides for all of creation, and through all creation He does good and instructs' (II.29:263). He vigorously rejects a particular interpretation of human motion because it would imply that 'all creatures will thus be evil' and would call the Scriptures lying when they affirm that God created all things very good (III.15:313). He defends the Eucharist on the basis of God's creation (IV.13:356-357) and interprets it as a joining of natural and supernatural:

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<sup>312</sup> In some instances this refers to Christ's deified flesh.

<sup>313</sup> This is certainly how Maximus reads it in Ad Thal.61 (Blowers:131-143). Popovitch also affirms this although he goes on to identify it rather problematically with Western humanism (2009:20).

<sup>314</sup> An affirmation of God's providence and care for creation is prominent throughout the tradition, evidenced also by the popularity of treatises on creation and on human nature, many of which draw on philosophical and 'scientific' thinking about the natural world and the human body (such as Basil's *Hexaemeron*, Gregory of Nyssa's *On the Creation of Man*, Ephrem the Syrian's *Hymns on Paradise*, Nemesius of Emesa's *On the Nature of Man* and many other homilies and treatises). I am employing John Damascene here again as a sort of 'summary' of the consensus of the tradition (although I am not even considering the first part of his *Fount of Knowledge* which gives an extensive summary of current philosophical and 'scientific' knowledge). For Maximus on God's providence, see Ad Thal.2 (Blowers:99-101).



Now, bread and wine are used because God knows human weakness and how most things that are not constantly and habitually used cannot be put up with and are shunned. With His usual condescension, therefore, He does through the ordinary things of nature those which surpass the natural order. And just as in the case of baptism, because it is the custom of men to wash themselves with water and anoint themselves with oil He joined the grace of the Spirit to oil and water and made it a laver of regeneration, so, because it is man's custom to eat bread and drink water and wine He joined His divinity to these and made them His body and blood, so that by the ordinary natural things we might be raised to those which surpass the order of nature. (IV.13:357)

Here the Spirit is joined to ordinary material things instead of replacing or superseding them. Finally, in a consideration of evil, John affirms that God does not create evil: 'Now, as they were made, all things that God made were very good. So, if they remain as they were created, then they are very good. But, if they freely withdraw from the natural and pass to the unnatural, then they become evil' (IV.20:386-87). If John truly presents the consensus of the tradition in his summary of the 'Orthodox faith' then this faith cannot be said to equate the material with evil or even to see the spiritual life as antithetical to physicality and corporeality.

Contemporary writers usually also stress that theosis does not imply a denial of the body. Norman Russell distinguishes between a 'realistic' approach to theosis that focuses on participation in God and an 'ethical' approach that puts theosis in terms of ascetic struggle and imitation of Christ (2009:26). After analysing various insights from the tradition he interprets theosis as becoming truly human (110) although he also acknowledges that it often expresses the desire to transcend bodily reality (113). In the final chapter, in which he considers what it would mean to 'live' theosis today, he presents it as a summary of Orthodox spiritual life consisting of liturgy, sacraments and ethical living. Such a spirituality 'takes full account of our corporeal nature. For the body is part of our identity. It is not something to be ignored or despised' (170). He points to the festal cycle as confirming a transformation of both body and soul. Nellas interprets deification primarily in terms of 'Christification', which turns away from autonomy toward dependence upon God. He is throughout affirmative of the material world (including science, politics, the arts) as long as it does not become autonomous of the divine (1987:95-97). Deification is achieved through the sacraments, which affirm and sanctify creation (129). The church 'is the perpetual marriage in space and time of the Creator with His creation, the enduring mingling of the created with the uncreated' (143). He insists that this is 'not an escape from the world but a transformation of it' (148). He ends with an analysis of the Great Canon, which he claims sets theosis into a cosmological context.

Yannaras, although not focusing specifically on theosis, strongly rejects a pietist interpretation of faith which he interprets as so individualistic that it denies the communal and ontological dimensions of faith. Instead he advocates an ecclesial deification that hallows the material world through art and architecture. He argues that 'by His incarnation Christ enthroned the whole of material creation on the throne of God: creation became the flesh of the Word, and all the world became the Church' (1984:249). The church thus becomes the 'flesh of the Word' and transfigures the created world (250). He claims that this is a 'personalising' and 'hypostasising' of the material (in contrast to Western 'technocracy' and 'dematerialization' that he condemns in the strongest terms). Evdokimov interprets holiness in terms of 'the healing of nature' (2001:98). After examining several examples of holiness in the tradition he speaks of its meaning for today in terms of social justice and transformation of the world (150-151). In a later reflection on culture and faith he suggests that

‘the Christian attitude before the world can never be just that of negation, be it ascetical or eschatological. The Christian attitude is always an affirmation but an eschatological one, a constant surpassing, which rather than closing, opens completely to the beyond’ (2001:209). Chrysavgis in an account of Orthodox spirituality also links theosis with ascesis. While acknowledging that asceticism has often been understood as ‘enmity towards the world’, he insists instead that it does not mean ‘to deny the world, but in fact to affirm the world, together with the body, as well as all of material creation’ (in Cunningham & Theocritoff, 2008:161). He summarises: ‘In the final analysis, the aim of asceticism is to regain a sense of wonder, to be filled with a sense of goodness and of God-likeness. It is to see all things in God and God in all things. And it is precisely here that ascesis encounters theosis. For the most divine experience is to discover the wonder of God in the beauty of the world and to discern the limitless nature of grace in the limitations of the human body and the natural creation’ (161). As a final example, Zizioulas interprets theosis primarily in terms of true personhood in right relationship. Theosis means to become a true person in full communion with God and thus to be fully ‘natural’ (2006:243). He insists that asceticism does not devalue the body or advocate ‘any kind of Manichaean dualism’ (303). The true mystic is most authentically human: ‘None, therefore, knows better what it means to be human; none has a deeper communion with humanity and with creation as a whole, than the ascetic’ (303-304). He argues that ‘the view that what man needs in order to obtain divine knowledge is the purification of the mind from all sensible things and concentration on itself or on God by way of ascending contemplation’ is ‘essentially Neoplatonic mysticism and as such it was rejected by the patristic tradition’. Instead, true mysticism (including hesychasm) is about love and thus in his view about ‘communion and relationship’ (305). If theosis then is not a denial of the body or corporeality to what extent can it be said to include the rest of creation?

### 3.2 Theosis only for humans?

Throughout the Eastern tradition, theosis is a human goal. From the first affirmations of deification in Athanasius and the Cappadocians it is humans who become divine not anyone or anything else. Russell’s recent presentation of ‘Orthodox thinking on theosis’ has only a single reference to a transformation of the cosmos ‘at the end of time’ in the context of the portrayal of the transfiguration in iconography (2009:102). The entire rest of the book is exclusively concerned with human beings. And in regard to ‘the end of time’ the redemption of animals and plants is explicitly rejected by some thinkers. As shown in chapter one, Isaac the Syrian is clear that non-human creation will have no place in heaven and that we will forget it easily enough. Only rational creatures attain to eternal life. This requirement of rationality for immortality is a fairly common assumption. Similar distinctions are made by Silouan the Athonite who apparently ‘loved’ creation greatly and was pained at any harm done to an animal or even a blade of grass<sup>315</sup> and yet was firmly convinced that they had no place in heaven and were infinitely inferior to human beings. Animals are limited to the earth and

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<sup>315</sup> Sophrony Sakharov comments on how unusual it is for such a ‘virile’ man to have compassion for animals! (1991:90). Interfering with the fertility of plants is ‘not a sin’ although compassion is still required (91). One can see in the text that the author finds even this compassion for animals and plants rather excessive and seeks to justify it.

ultimately one must forget the earth and strive for love of God alone. Friendship with animals is a perversion of the natural order, leads to a forgetting of God, and causes ‘offence to God’ (1991:91).<sup>316</sup> As seen above, theosis is generally achieved through prayer and virtuous practices and thus requires will and rationality, which are only attributed to humans. At times heaven is imagined as a pretty bleak place where we will not eat (and won’t have stomachs or digestive systems) and where no plants or animals have any place. Even Ephrem, who depicts Paradise in such beautiful natural imagery, can find no place for animals there.<sup>317</sup>

As mentioned in chapter one, several contemporary writers articulate eschatological visions that hope for universal salvation. Ware bases himself on Silouan and Isaac to entertain the possibility of the ‘redemption of all’ based on God’s overwhelming love and compassion (2004:193-215). But this love extends only to humans not to any other creatures. Staniloae develops a full eschatological vision at the end of his systematic theology that is in conversation with several Western thinkers (1995:291-366). Yet non-human animals are not mentioned with even one word and the only consideration of materiality is within the context of the resurrected (human) body.<sup>318</sup> Indeed, the way the resurrection ‘body’ is described by Staniloae and others makes it difficult to see in what sense it is still material (1995:320). It is also not clear how human matter can be disconnected from the matter of the whole cosmos. While we are certainly not reducible merely to our bodies, our corporeality itself (if we are to speak of resurrection of the *body*) consists of atoms and molecules, just like all other bodies in the universe, and indeed is in close symbiosis with quite a few of them.<sup>319</sup> If none of this applies to the resurrection body, in what sense can this still be considered a resurrection of the *body*? If it is only the soul (or the ‘information’ of our ‘consciousness’ as in many contemporary accounts<sup>320</sup>) that provides any link with our current identity, it is unclear in what manner this is not simply a rejection of the Christian belief in the resurrection of the body so strongly maintained in the face of Gnostic and Manichean disregard for the body and matter in general. And indeed the new creation/heaven/paradise are usually painted in the glorious colours of the earthly garden of Eden (although it is not necessarily always imagined as a restoration of paradise<sup>321</sup>). Ephrem the Syrian’s paradise—unlike that of his later compatriot Isaac—is filled with flowers (even if there are no animals), as are the gardens occasionally visited by Mary in many dormition

<sup>316</sup> He supports this by pointing out that nowhere in the New Testament does Christ ever stop to care for an animal (1991:91).

<sup>317</sup> Although God cares for animals, they have no moral obligations and need not subdue their desires, because they will not be raised with humans (*Virginity* XII.19-20, 1983:167-68).

<sup>318</sup> This is particularly disappointing, as he is clearly aware of Moltmann and refers to him repeatedly (Moltmann also wrote the introductions to each volume of the German translation). Admittedly most of Moltmann’s more explicitly ecological theology had not yet been written at this point. Maybe Staniloae is too early to be expected to take account of ecological questions, but it is still striking that animals never appear on his horizon. He speaks throughout this treatment of a ‘spiritualised materiality’ [*vergeistigte Materie*] where nature is ‘overwhelmed’ [*überwältigt*] by the Spirit (1995:321). The German term has strong connotations of violence [I was unable to check the Rumanian original].

<sup>319</sup> Theodorou recognises this when he says that ‘Christ’s redemptive work leads to a renewing not only of the human but of the entire world. The entire material creation participates in the joy of this renewal. Salvation, indeed, comprehends a renewing of our entire being; but since our being is linked to the cosmos, it comprises also a renewing of the universe with that of the human. One can say that the global order of the world receives all the reflections and all the rays of the uncreated light such as it was manifested on Mount Tabor’ (1981: 254-255). Popovitch also links the ‘becoming incorruptible’ of the human with that of all of creation (1997b:423).

<sup>320</sup> This is particularly strong in Edwards (1992:52-55; 1999:77) but also used by many others.

<sup>321</sup> For the variety of depictions in the tradition, see Wright (2000).

accounts. It seems difficult to imagine heaven as anything other than a more beautiful, and eminently cleaner, version of this earth.<sup>322</sup> This is the earth and the concrete bodily beauty we know and an embodied life is difficult to envision without any likeness to it.

Bulgakov is maybe the Orthodox thinker to have explored eschatological questions the fullest in recent years.<sup>323</sup> Yet his vision of the eschaton is anthropocentric to the core: ‘And only the self-blindedness of materialism considers the world to be merely material in nature. In fact, it is spiritually material. This spiritual causality enters the natural world through the spiritual world (for it is in the guardianship of the holy angels) and through its connection with man’ (2008b:401). Although he can envision a transformation of the natural world, relying heavily on an interpretation of the transfiguration, this is a rather spiritualised version of the world that has little if any continuity with this earth. He does indeed imagine a deification (or rather, sophianisation) of ‘all of creation’, but envisions this only through its burning without any reference to what might happen to the plants and animals of this creation: ‘It is precisely the Holy Spirit who accomplishes the transfiguration of the universe: the energy of the Holy Spirit destroys the sinful, imperfect old world and creates a new world, with the renewal of all creation. This is the power of the Fire that burns, melts, transmutes, illuminates, and transfigures’ (421). Although he speaks of this in terms of a cataclysmic conflagration, he claims that this does not constitute violence to creation, although it is hard to see how that is so. In his chapter on ‘the universal resurrection’ it is quite clear that he has little interest in the resurrection of anything non-human. Like Ware, he envisions the possibility of universal salvation, but as with the other thinkers it is strictly limited to humans: ‘Just as on the pathways of salvation in earthly life the hidden life in Christ is united with natural humanity, so in resurrection all human beings are clothed in Christ by the Holy Spirit in connection with each proper creaturely human life. But, to be sure, creaturely limitedness here does not limit the power of divine action in the manifestation of the divine image in man’ (457). If ‘creaturely limitedness’ indeed ‘does not limit the power of divine action’, why can it not include creatures other than humans?<sup>324</sup>

Yet it is actually not true that the rest of creation is not included in this vision at all. The problem is rather that it is included only *via* the human. The notion of humans as microcosm who summarise all of creation and somehow bear it within them is seen as sufficient redemption of the rest of creation. And in this restricted sense several writers do actually speak of a *deification* of creation. This is particular strong in Bulgakov’s *The Comforter*, suggesting an important link between deification and the work of the Spirit.

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<sup>322</sup> Alfeyev, however, insists that ‘the concept of Paradise, as that of hell, must be detached from the material images with which it is usually connected’ (2002:225). In a briefer piece on eschatology, he distinguishes between ‘personal’ and ‘universal-historical’ notions of eschatology which both apply to humans. The rest of creation is nowhere mentioned in his summary of Orthodox views on eschatology (in Cunningham & Theokritoff, 2008:109). Staniloae does envision ‘spiritual flowers’ in a transfigured earth of ‘unspeakable beauty’ and ‘un-wilting freshness’ with a sun that is seven-fold brighter than the present one (1995:321).

<sup>323</sup> He points out at the beginning of his treatment that ‘the Church *has not established a single universally obligatory dogmatic definition in the domain of eschatology*’ (2008b:379; emphasis his). See also Evdokimov’s chapter on ‘Eschatology’ which summarises many similar ideas. It does not mention non-human creation but speaks only of God’s great love for ‘mankind’ (2001:11-35).

According to Bulgakov nature is saved through ‘its humanisation’ in ‘spirit-bearing man’ (2004:202). ‘Nature is subject to the force of inertia, and it therefore must be guided and ruled by man... nature remains in an unfinished form and needs to be “transfigured” by man’ (206). Indeed, Bulgakov maintains that nature is ‘not very receptive to the revelation of the Spirit’ and because of this ‘poor receptivity’ it is subject to vanity although still sustained by the kenosis of the Spirit (206). ‘Creation can become spirit-bearing and will be so after the Transfiguration of the world, under a new heaven and on a new earth; and this calling of creation to spirituality can be recognised in the sanctification of various natural elements’ (210). This sanctification is possible through the Holy Spirit at work in the ‘creaturely Sophia,’ i.e. the human being in which the world becomes revealed as sophia: ‘As both a created spirit and a spirit who is divine according to his source, man is open both to divine life, in which he participates by virtue of his deification, and to the creaturely Sophia, whose hypostasis he is’ (211-212). Drawing on Maximus, Bulgakov sees humans as the world’s rationality able to discern and understand the entire cosmos: ‘Man is the logos of the world, and all its particular logoses as well as their mutual relation are accessible to him; and he is also the soul of the world, in which the world lives itself out. In the depths of his thought, man knows the world, and by the force of his life he actively realises himself in the world, humanising the latter’ (212). Bulgakov speaks beautifully of a ‘kenosis’ of the Spirit in creation. In this context he locates the Spirit in the ‘flesh’ of the world which is open to this work of the Spirit: ‘This natural grace of the Holy Spirit, which constitutes the very foundation of the being of creation, exists in the very *flesh* of the world, in the matter of the world. It is the precondition for its sanctification through the reception of the Holy Spirit’ especially through the sacraments, in which ‘things and matter absorb the invisibly descending grace of the Holy Spirit the way the earth absorbs moisture’ (220, 221). Through ‘*sophianic* spirit-bearingness, creation is capable of receiving spirit through sanctification’ (221). Again this happens through a humanisation of the world ‘which has its ontological centre in man. This is the deification of creation’ via human self-consciousness (222). Speaking of Pentecost he says ‘The deification of all creation occurs’ and the Spirit descends ‘upon *all* humanity, upon *all* creation’ (278). The kenosis of the Spirit is the ‘Divine-human deification of creation’ (284).<sup>325</sup>

Bulgakov does occasionally refer to non-human animals explicitly but consistently sees them as subordinated to human rule. A bridge exists between humans and animals through domestication of animals where they come to ‘*obey* man’ (2004:225). Apparently, animals are saved through our use and consumption of them. Later he is quite emphatic that only humans have access to ‘spiritual life’ because ‘it is inaccessible to entities or forms of being that do not possess the spiritual principles, entities for which the spirit is alien: this includes the whole animal world and the pre-animal world, plants and minerals’ (300). Animals have ‘embryonic traces of love’ because ‘the animal world is included in man; and so the love that exists in the animal world is included in human love’ visible through human attachment to animals (via domestication). Therefore ‘the relationship between man and the animal world, man’s lordship over the latter, includes the

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<sup>324</sup> In fact, most paradoxically, he employs the popular quote from Isaac about the compassionate heart, which explicitly includes compassion to *animals*, in order to argue for the salvation of all *humans*.

norm of their mutual love; and here, in accordance with his dominant position in nature, man's task is to educate the animals and, by humanising them, to raise them, to the extent this is possible for them, to the higher love for God through man', which, however, always remains purely physical in animals 'since they are deprived of spirit' (315). It is the Holy Spirit who 'inspires man to serve creation and to rule it while serving it' (338). This results in a '*spiritualisation* of matter' (345). At times he comes dangerously close to identifying matter with the fall (347). The eschatological transfiguration then becomes an elimination of the material. 'The transfiguration of the world must be included in the universal resurrection, for it is clear that resurrected humanity cannot live in an untransfigured world' (348). Thus the world is transfigured through us and on our account. 'In this way, creation is deified: divine life is communicated to it; and it is raised from the creaturely Sophia into the creaturely-divine Sophia' (356). As he makes clear a few lines further this happens through 'Divine Humanity'. The deification of creation occurs in our hypostasis (357). Thus, although Bulgakov clearly does envision a deification of all of creation this is consistent with his eschatological account: Creation is deified only in and through humanity which personalises, humanises, and encapsulates it in its own being.

Zizioulas also speaks of deification of creation and does so explicitly in response to the ecological crisis which he defines as a failure to relate properly to otherness (2006:18-19). We are 'called to bring creation into communion with God so that it may survive and participate in the life of the Holy Trinity' (43). As images of God we are 'called to offer the rest of creation the possibility of overcoming mortality' (67). He advocates a 'eucharistic ethos' that has 'ecological significance' through an ontological inter-relationship (92). In this context he rejects a 'personalization of nature' because only human beings with freedom are hypostatic persons. Consequently, 'the human being is called to bring the rest of creation into communion with God so that the *hypostasis* of every creature might be saved from mortality and thus be shown to be a true *hypostasis*, that is, truly existing as particular and 'other', and not swallowed up by the general' (95). He explicitly interprets the eschatological transfiguration of the world in terms of a 'survival of our world', which is not 'a denial of history and matter in a Gnostic or Neoplatonic sense' (246). Yet, he does not explain in this context how he envisions the world to survive and in the rest of the chapter again stresses only human personhood as essential to any eschatological vision. In a different chapter where he considers the distinctions between 'created' and 'uncreated' and argues that the Christian conception of creation is quite different from the philosophical notion of the cosmos, he firmly rejects any 'inherent' immortality of the soul and argues for a more corporeal vision: 'But God does not want only souls to be saved—maybe this is what lies behind the immortality of the soul idea—he wants also the salvation and survival of bodies and of the world as a whole. If there is, therefore, an immortality by grace—and there is—let us not restrict it to the soul, because deification concerns the whole of creation, including the material world' (265). In the same text he affirms again a survival of the material world (268). His account then tempers that of Bulgakov although it still

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<sup>325</sup> Staniloae also speaks of 'deification of the created world' (2000:1) but then interprets it primarily as a backdrop for human spiritual growth (3). He also often employs the language of transfiguring the world (55, 102).

interprets humans as the main actors in the deification of creation and fails to explicate fully what such deification might mean concretely.

In fact, some Patristic writers also mention a deification of creation. Maximus affirms that the Spirit works to overcome all divisions, ‘displaying the grace of God effective to deify the universe’ and moving the whole universe to harmonious well-being (Ad Thal.2, Blowers:100). In answer to a different question he maintains that nothing is naturally capable of deification and yet ‘by the grace of God... deification is bestowed proportionately on created beings’ (Ad Thal.22, Blowers:118). After a reflection on the incarnation he says: ‘For truly he who is the Creator of the essence of created beings by nature had also to become the very Author of the deification of creatures by grace, in order that the Giver of well-being might appear also as the gracious Giver of eternal well-being’ (Ad Thal.60, Blowers:128). Hence for Maximus deification proceeds through divine grace and applies to all creatures in varying degrees. John Damascene focuses especially on the role of the Spirit who sanctifies creation (I.8:184) and perfects ‘the creation of all things’ (I.12:196). God pervades all things and communicates with all according to their respective receptivity (I.13:197). Through Christ ‘creation has been sanctified with the divine blood’ (IV.4:338). He does suggest, however, that resurrection only applies to humans (IV.27:401). Similarly in Maximus the deification of creation seems to be accomplished primarily in and through humans as they overcome the various divisions of the created order and are finally united to God via theosis. Yet both suggest the importance of God’s grace and of the activity of the Spirit in deification. How might a deification of creation be envisioned that does not see it purely swallowed up in the human?

### 3.3 Sanctification of Creation?

As we have seen Bulgakov, Staniloae, and Zizioulas perceive the deification of creation in terms of its humanisation through the human priesthood on behalf of creation. All of creation is encapsulated in the human and lifted up in human activity. This is, in fact, often read in light of the blessings of Theophany, as by Argenti who sees it as the mission of the church to ‘offer the entire universe back to the Creator’ and ‘to sanctify the whole universe, including, therefore, the material world. In becoming incarnate, the Word of God entered into the every [sic] place in the material universe in order to re-create it. When He stepped into the Jordan on the day of His Baptism, Christ sanctified the waters by the Holy Spirit, Who “moved upon the face of the waters” at the time of the original creation (see Gen 1:2). Of course, everything begins with the renewal of man, for man alone can give thanks through the Eucharist on behalf of the whole creation’ (252). He concludes from this that

we must bring about the transformation and the sanctification of the old fallen world so as to incorporate it into the ‘new creation’... of which Christ is the Head. All things in Heaven and on earth must be united in Him (see Eph. 1:10). Today’s ecologists are right in saying that the environment as a whole has to be changed. It is with the *totality* of this transfiguring change in mind that the water of Baptism, the oil of anointing, and the bread and wine of the Eucharist are offered up—‘in all and for all’—to the sanctifying power of the Divine Spirit Who fills all things and transforms all things. (2006:290)

This is beautiful language and emphatically speaks of our human responsibility for the creation. Yet it can easily become troubling when such human ‘transformation’ and ‘sanctification’ of the earth is read in terms of

human ‘improvement’ (or worse ‘consumption’ or ‘domestication’) of it. As discussed in chapter two, the central idea of human priesthood seems to be that humans must ‘humanise’ creation and somehow ‘transfigure’ it. This has dangerous implications. How are we to know what is the destiny of creation and how it is best ‘transfigured’? Most of our attempts at improving creation have resulted in disaster for all parties involved. We know far too little about how creation functions to ‘improve’ it effectively, as Deane-Drummond points out in the context of a summary of Bulgakov: ‘we deceive ourselves if we think that we have the necessary wisdom and knowledge to intervene correctly for the good of the biosphere. Such has been the problem of models of ‘stewardship’ of the natural environment that presumes human management will be all-sufficient’ (2008:125). A ‘transformation’ or ‘transfiguration’ of nature must be thought differently.<sup>326</sup> Let me suggest three possibilities.

First, as we have seen, theosis is closely linked to the notion of the human as microcosm and the task of ‘priesthood’. In the earlier discussion of these themes in chapter two, I suggested that it might be more appropriate to regard Christ as the true microcosm. This may well also be applicable here. If theosis is really a mirror image of the incarnation and if the incarnation can be conceived more ‘inclusively’, i.e. if Christ assumes all flesh and not only human flesh, if Christ is the true microcosm, the one who recapitulates *all* creatures in himself and not only humans, then in him also all creatures participate in the divine. If his carrying of human flesh into the divine life in the ascension is taken to have significance for all humans and not just him personally, then similarly his taking of all created flesh—of the very dust of the stars—hence of all of creation into the divine life should be understood to have similar implications for all flesh and for the whole cosmos. And indeed, as we have seen, the liturgical texts for the Ascension, the Dormition, and the Transfiguration do indeed read him (and the Theotokos) as such a bridge between ‘created’ and ‘uncreated’ and not merely between human and divine, even if they obviously do not explicate this in any ecological sense. Liturgically, these feasts do indeed have cosmic significance, something that is never denied (even if not carried much further) by the subsequent tradition. Of course for the liturgical texts and for theological reflection, humanity occupies centre stage in the drama of redemption. Yet this does not mean that the cosmos remains unaffected or is not included. The eschatological aspect of theosis that conceives it in terms of final redemption and wholeness is similarly appropriate for all of creation, even if this application has been made even less. The vision of beautification and wholeness is central to the Hebrew vision of shalom that informs all subsequent reflections on Paradise and heaven. Eschatological visions that exclude animals from the recreation of all things are utterly inconsistent with these visions of wholeness and peace. If theosis is truly about the participation of redeemed creatures in the life of God who becomes ‘all in all’—this must include all creatures and not just human ones.<sup>327</sup>

<sup>326</sup> It is interesting that Popovitch who often chides human cruelty to animals also considers a transfiguration of nature the essential task of the human being (2009:50). We must control, tame, sanctify, and transfigure nature (51). Yet, he follows this with the judgement: ‘For the satisfaction of his numerous senseless needs, man has turned this precious planet of God’s into a slaughterhouse’ (52).

<sup>327</sup> Obviously, we are not here trying to speculate about what ‘heaven’ might look like or trying to determine the future of the cosmos (or envisioning immortality of souls or indeed of bodies). Rather, we are concerned with the implications of



Second, the language of grace and the references to the Spirit already noted in Maximus and Damascus are significant. Palamas, who in some sense provides the fullest explication of theosis as the goal of the spiritual life, consistently speaks of it in terms of divine grace which comes to dwell in us. Maximus envisions a state in which ‘God will be all in all wholly penetrating all who are his in a way that is appropriate to each’ (Amb.7, Blowers:53). Palamas cites this passage to explore what it might mean to receive ‘God in His wholeness’ (III.i.27, 83). He insists that deification is not simply about acquiring virtues, but ‘it resides in the radiance and grace of God’ (ibid.). Although the virtues still play a role for him, it is significant that deification is put primarily in terms of being filled with divine grace. This relies on his distinction between God’s essence and the divine energies. Although we cannot access God’s essence, ‘grace is communicated to all worthy of it, in a way proper and peculiar to each one’ (III.i.29, 85). The saint becomes ‘a temple of God by reason of the grace that indwells him’ (III.i.31, 86). We are deified by being united to God and receiving the divine energies (III.i.33). This deification is accomplished through the Spirit and it is a divine gift: ‘Thus the deifying gift of the Spirit is a mysterious light, and transforms into light those who receive its richness; He does not only fill them with eternal light, but grants them a knowledge and a life appropriate to God’ (III.i.35, 90). This spiritual light ‘is a spiritual power, distinct from all created cognitive faculties in its transcendence, and made present by grace in rational natures which have been purified’ (III.ii.14, 100). As the references to ‘rational natures’, to ‘the saint’ and to ‘knowledge’ indicate, Palamas is referring throughout to humans. Yet if it is truly God’s grace and the activity of the Spirit that effects this deification, there is no reason why it should not apply to everything created. Nothing in creation is devoid of God’s grace and the Spirit creates, sustains, and fills the entire universe.<sup>328</sup> As Athanasius says: ‘For this purpose, then, the incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Word of God comes into our realm, although he was not formerly distant. For no part of creation is left void of him; while abiding with his own Father, he has filled all things in every place’ (*Inc.*8, 2011:65). For Athanasius God is now present everywhere: ‘For the Word unfolded himself everywhere, above

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these images and visions within the liturgy for humans and non-humans *now*, i.e. explicating the eschatological dimension of the liturgy as it is celebrated in the present. Bartholomew says: ‘Focusing on the “last times” or the “last things” is a way of envisioning this world in light of the next’ (2011:244). Mélia also stresses that liturgical eschatology does not replace time but enters into it and enriches it (1982:135). He points out that ‘eschatology remains always a project but one must not consider this project only by its final goal; one must also consider it as an opening beforehand... by removing eschatology unilaterally into the future one risks making it appear alienating. Paradise does not replace terrestrial life by a sort of magic. When Revelation promises that “all tears will be wiped off” it does not refer to the action of a sponge but to the accomplishment of truth and of justice; it is a consolation of the strong and not of the feeble, it is a liberation and an achievement and not a defeat magically transformed’ (140). To give a Western example of doing this, Rossing applies explicitly eschatological imagery to environmental action: ‘New Jerusalem is a vision for the future. It is a vision that we can glimpse even now: in the river flowing through the heart of Boston, from the heart of God; in a tree nursery tended by low-income gardeners in the heart of Baltimore; in the tree-planting eucharistic liturgies of Christian churches in Zimbabwe; in the work of community building, justice seeking, bread baking, nation healing. In every tree, every city, we can glimpse God’s holy city dawning in our midst, both beyond and before the millennium’ (in Hessel & Ruether, 2000:219).

<sup>328</sup> Bulgakov admits this in some places: ‘The beauty of the world is an effect of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Beauty’; ‘All things are beautiful in nature: the elements of water and fire, air and sky, mountains and seas, plants and flowers’ (2004:201, 202). In one case he even attributes the image of God in nature: ‘But the holy angels who watch over nature have not abandoned it; and ineffaceable is the image of God that is imprinted in nature, which, although not yet reborn, is being reborn. Despite all the cracks of being, the Holy Spirit is its life force, which cannot be defeated by the forces

and below and in the depths and in the breadth: above, in creation; below, in the incarnation; in the depths, in hell; in breadth, in the world. Everything is filled with the knowledge of God' (*Inc.*16, 2011:85).<sup>329</sup> Or, much more recently, John of Kronstadt affirms:

God works in our body, in its natural function, supporting it, feeding it, and rearing it. He also acts in the grass, or in the trees, or in the animals, clothing the grass, rearing the tree and adorning it with leaves and fruit, feeding the animals and rearing their bodies. Of ourselves, we cannot do or create anything in our body, not one jot, as it is said, 'Thou canst not make one hair white or black'. God is equally in the infinitely great and in the infinitely small, not being limited either by the one or the other, but is wholly present in everything, being indivisible and above all. (1984:87)

God is present in all of creation, loves and cares for all of it.<sup>330</sup> Certainly nature cannot be said to be devoid of God's grace.

This is precisely what is affirmed at the feasts of Theophany and of the Transfiguration: the Spirit comes to sanctify the waters; the mountain and all of creation reflect the divine glory as they are enveloped by the cloud of the Spirit. Hopko suggests that 'the water placed in a larger receptacle in the midst of the church, or freely flowing in a natural source, is decorated with candles and flowers as the symbol of the beautiful world of God's original creation through His Word and Spirit—the same beautiful world which shall become the Kingdom of God at the end of the ages through its redemption by the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ, and the same Holy Spirit' (1984:155). Similarly, Schmemmann speculates that at Theophany for John the Baptist, 'everything ignited and burst into flame with the joy of creation's first beauty, as the world once again was revealed as God's world, purified, washed, reborn, filled with praise and thanksgiving' (1994:70). In regard to the blessing of fruit at the Transfiguration he says: 'It is as if the Church addresses itself to the entire world, as if God's right hand of blessing were being extended over all through these rites of blessing and sanctification... in this rite of blessing we see the world as if for the first time, as the reflection of God's

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hostile to being. Nature is indestructible and, in this sense, immortal, just as man is immortal, even though death has entered it just as it has entered man' (2004:207).

<sup>329</sup> While employing more Western terminology, Habgood affirms the same presence of God in all of nature: 'It would be very small-minded to suppose that the gracious love of God which can redeem and fulfill our own nature is irrelevant to nature at large, just as it would be to suppose that the wider environment in which we are called to live our lives, is significant only to us. That God communicates himself in love through the whole of existence, is one of the truths to which the Incarnation bears witness. Nature and grace, on this understanding, both belong within the same creative outpouring. It follows that the grace encountered in nature is not a series of occasional special benevolences towards us, but is the love which draws the whole creation towards its ultimate fulfillment in God himself. Thus to those who ask, why should we care about what happens to the world of nature, except for our own selfish ends? the answer is plain. Nature was not created for us alone. We may have gained unique powers, but other forms of existence also have their place within the purposes of God, a place which has often been shamefully dismissed. To perceive God's graciousness in nature is to see the world in a new light, and to bring it to a new degree of penitence and hopefulness' (2002:169).

<sup>330</sup> Louth, in explicating Maximus' vision of the logoi, speaks of them as revealing that 'the created world has value, meaning, beauty, in itself: because God is the supreme craftsman, his creation is supremely lovely' (in Horrell et al., 2010:218). He later concludes that 'the contribution of Eastern Orthodoxy to the pressing questions of the environment is not to be sought in any specific solutions, not thought of by others, but rather in our faithfulness to a sense of the holiness of the created order' (ibid., 222). Or, as Bartholomew says: 'The Lord fills all of creation with His divine presence in one continuous connection from the substance of atoms to the mind of God' (2011:354). Edwards affirms that 'the God who "loves the living" dwells in all creatures through the Spirit. The Creator Spirit is present in every flower, bird, and human being, in every quasar and in every atomic particle, closer to them than they are to themselves, enabling them to be and to become' (1999:94). McDaniel claims the same but clarifies: 'This does not mean that God loves all creatures equally or in the same way. There may be more to love in the chimpanzee than the amoeba, by virtue of the richness of the chimpanzee's sentience. The point is simply that each creature is loved by God on its own terms and for its own sake, however rich those terms might be' (1995:127).

wisdom and love' (1994:159, 161). Creation, incarnation, and eschatology must be held together. Although we tend to think of the sacraments especially as grace-filled materiality, Theophany and the Transfiguration remind us that the presence of the Spirit extends far beyond them to all of creation.<sup>331</sup>

And the liturgical texts and at times even their actions do suggest a more inclusive picture of eschaton and theosis. In the liturgy 'things above' rejoice and celebrate with 'things below'. Various feasts (Nativity, Ascension, Pentecost, Dormition) speak of a bridge between heaven and earth or even of a unification of the two realms. In Christ's incarnation heaven comes to earth, the 'spiritual' becomes 'material' (while not losing its own identity). And in the ascension Christ carries the material into the divine life of God, where it does not dispense with its materiality or its fleshly character. As the liturgy for Theophany also says: 'Today the whole creation shines with light from on high. Today error is laid low and the coming of the Master has made for us a way of salvation. Today things above keep feast with things below, and things below commune with things above... Today earth and sea share the joy of the world, and the world is filled with gladness' (Vespers, 355).<sup>332</sup> Andronikof speaks of the Transfiguration as prophesying the 'state of the creation united to its Creator' (1981:16) and later suggests that the very function of liturgy is to sanctify the universe (1981:25). Popovitch points to the ways in which Christ's baptism sanctifies the earth, blesses the waters, and illumines all creation and to the manner in which Christ's transfiguration saves the universe that humans have 'troubled' (1993:96, 98, 104, 190). Christ establishes communion between heaven and earth (1997b:73). This 'communion' between things above and below precisely does not eliminate (or 'spiritualise' to the point of non-recognition) the material but instead makes it more fully itself. It overcomes a separation and brings the two realms together instead of one swallowing up the other. As Elias the Armenian affirms in his homily on the Transfiguration: 'This light appears from the heaven on the earth; it leads and attracts earthly beings toward the heavens; and, when it elevates itself from the earth toward the heights, it provokes the beings above to humble themselves down to the earth' (Coune:124).<sup>333</sup> Here a kind of travel back and forth between

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<sup>331</sup> Steenberg claims that the Orthodox hesitation to single out or quantify particular sacraments 'reflects a perception of sacraments as those means of transformative encounter in Christ, through the Spirit, that deify creation in the ministry of Christ's body' (in Cunningham & Theokritoff, 2008:130). Several Western theologians have begun to explore an ecological pneumatology. Elizabeth Johnson suggests that 'we need to appreciate all over again that the whole universe is a sacrament, vivified by the energy of the Creator Spirit present in all creation as its very animation. The Spirit effects the redemption of both languishing vines and broken-hearted merry-makers: that is, the Spirit's presence is for *all* species. We need to realize that the destruction of this vibrant, complex natural world is tantamount to sacrilege. And we need to fathom that the human species is embedded as an intrinsic, interdependent part of the magnificence of this universe, not as lords of the manor but kin in the community of life, charged with being sisters and brothers, friends and lovers, mothers and fathers, priests and prophets, cocreators and children of the earth that is God's good creation' (Johnson in Hessel & Ruether, 2000:18). She explores the role of the Spirit for ecological purposes also in her most recent book (2008:181-201), as does Edwards in several places (1999:94; 2004; 2006:27-47). The Spirit plays a strong, although somewhat untraditional, role in Wallace's work (1996 and 2005). Birch, although not reflecting specifically on the role of the Spirit, argues that 'there is no reason to deny that the lives of non-human creatures contribute to the life of God and have an eternal value to God. In that way they too would participate in immortality' (Birch, 1997:45).

<sup>332</sup> 'Today the creation is enlightened. Today all nature is glad, things of heaven and things upon earth' (Theophany, Compline, 362).

<sup>333</sup> John Damascene also hints at something like this when he talks about Christ as effecting 'a union of divinity with humanity, and through this, with all creatures, so that God would be all in all' (Coune:205).

the two realms is imagined (which indeed is traversed in both directions, just as is the case in the liturgical texts). Or as Patriarch Bartholomew emphasises:

We must trust in the ‘newness of the Spirit’, who will transform death into resurrection. The obsession with individual salvation (for which only a few, in any case, are destined) is being replaced by a sense of limitless communion. Fear of the flesh is being replaced by the call to transfigure it, whether through monastic asceticism, the love between a man and a woman, or the struggle of the creative act. Escapism into the heavenly realm is being replaced by a union between heaven and earth, by ‘fidelity to the earth’ and all its creatures, so as to transfigure them. (1997:229)<sup>334</sup>

It is this union and indeed communion between heaven and earth, the spiritual and the material, which the liturgy teaches us. The Transfiguration speaks precisely of this: It is an interpenetration of spiritual and material where neither is eliminated and both are enriched.<sup>335</sup> Admittedly, language of transfiguration can be problematic here as it can imply that a transfiguration of flesh or physicality ‘spiritualises’ them to the point where their materiality is eliminated (it also tends to imply that the spiritual is far superior to the material).<sup>336</sup> In that sense it might be better to speak of ‘sanctification’ or ‘hallowing’ of the material (which is indeed the terminology more commonly employed by the liturgical texts). Matter is sanctified and blessed, but it *remains* matter—maybe more fully so than before. It is purified of the pollution we have wreaked on it (either personally or by allowing the forces of evil larger than ourselves to take over) and thus becomes beautiful and whole. All the elements and the entire cosmos are sanctified by God who is eternally united to it by the incarnation and the presence of the Spirit. This is what we celebrate at each liturgy: earth and heaven are reconciled and embrace each other. Both Theophany and the Transfiguration give us a vision of wholeness, beauty and splendour that affects and includes all of creation. All of creation is healed and blessed in Christ’s baptism, all of creation and fleshly materiality is transfigured, made whole and deified in the transfiguration. In fact, as Vidalis points out in an analysis of the blessings of Theophany: ‘The sanctification of nature becomes hence the means for our own sanctification’ (2001:256). Theosis then cannot be conceived as either a denial of materiality or as a purely human affair in which the rest of creation has no part. All of creation receives God’s grace, is permeated by the Spirit, participates in the divine and becomes whole through its relation with God. This does not deny that different creatures may do so differently, but such difference need not imply a ‘hierarchy’ which conceives of human participation as far superior to the rest of creation. Indeed,

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<sup>334</sup> Yannoulatos says that ‘the Spirit—“who is present everywhere and filleth all things”, as we hear in the prayer with which Orthodox services usually begin—continues to do its work, sanctifying human beings and fulfilling and completing the salvation of the entire universe’ (2003:29). Although he embraces the traditional Orthodox view that sees humans as masters of creation, he warns of the dangers of technology and an alienation from nature. Instead ‘some reconciliation between humanity and nature is urgently needed. It is time we understood that nature is something sacred. It does not lie outside the sphere of the Holy Spirit’s activity’ (37). He also refers to environmental problems as jeopardising the rights of future generations (75) and briefly explores how change applies to creation in a way that sees humans and the rest of creation in harmony (170). In this context he claims that ‘the entire universe is the province of God’s sanctifying energies and his uncreated grace’ (171).

<sup>335</sup> Indeed, it is occasionally suggested that the incarnation does constitute a ‘new’ experience for God in some way. The affirmation that it is not an ‘afterthought’ to fix our sin, but had always been included in God’s plan seems to support this. While I do not wish to speculate about this possibility here, certainly the spiritual dimension of creation is enriched by its close link with the material (instead of being hindered by it as Plato claimed).

<sup>336</sup> Louth clarifies that ‘to speak of transfiguration as the goal and purpose of creation is to suggest a genuine transformation, but not a transformation into something else, rather it is a transformation that reveals the true reality of what is transfigured’ (in Horrell et al., 2010:216).

the difference between an insect's and a mammal's response to grace or participation in the divine may well be far greater than that between humans and other mammals. Obviously, we do not know how other creatures participate in God, just as we cannot know how exactly they are to be redeemed (we know so little about our own redemption). But what we do know seems to indicate that God's love as Creator and redeemer is all-inclusive.

Third, instead of focusing on human improvement of creation, the liturgies instead stress that *Christ* transfigures and sanctifies the creation through the activity of the Spirit.<sup>337</sup> Indeed, Christ must purify the waters precisely because human sin (and demonic evil) has polluted them. Creation itself is good and even holy because God has made it and dwells within it. It is only when human sin has introduced evil into the world and when it becomes territory occupied by the enemy that it requires purification, healing and blessing. And liturgically such introduction of evil happens now through our action not (only) in some immemorial past. Even the blessings performed by the priests during the liturgies of baptism and especially at Theophany do not constitute a human act of transforming ordinary water into holy water. Rather, the Spirit is invoked to descend upon the waters and restore them to their original purity: 'The world tore away from God, forgot him, stopped seeing him and immersed itself in sin, darkness and death. But God did not forget the world. Here, in his baptism, God returns it to us, shining with the glory of the stars and the beauty it had on the first day of creation' (Schmemmann, 1994:69). It is not the human priest who changes the water. Rather the priest (and indeed everyone present joins in these prayers, since many of them are sung by the choir) prays for *God's* activity of blessing. As Ware stresses in his introduction to the feast in the *Menaion*: 'Lest the phrase "Great Blessing of the Waters" be misunderstood, it should immediately be emphasised that the blessing is effected, not by the officiating priest and the people who are praying with him, but by Christ Himself, who is the true celebrant in this as in all the mysteries of the Church. It is Christ who has blessed the waters once for all at His baptism in the Jordan: the liturgical ceremony of blessing is simply an extension of Christ's original act' (1998:56). The Spirit is thus already active on behalf of creation, blessing and sanctifying it. The priest and the people simply make visible this sanctifying activity.<sup>338</sup> Liturgy then cannot be confined merely to chanting some hymns in a building, but should be truly 'for the life of the world' as Schmemmann insists over and over (despite his negative comments about social justice and 'liberal agendas').<sup>339</sup> He affirms this precisely in regard to Theophany:

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<sup>337</sup> Andronikof points out that the liturgical texts are very christocentric and suggests that we today require a more explicit pneumatology (1988:268).

<sup>338</sup> In this context it would be interesting to examine further the many other liturgical occasions of blessing not necessarily linked to particular feasts (and outlined in the Book of Needs). For their prevalence and for an interesting account of the way in which sacred space functions (another relevant topic not explored here), see Gerstel (in Krueger, 2006:103-123). Joubert asserts that there is no such thing as objective sacred space, but that the sacrality attributed to space is that of the Spirit's presence in it (2006:233).

<sup>339</sup> Plekon relates some of Schmemmann's statements and then develops a vision of holiness from Schmemmann's work that would be more attentive to social and political dimensions (2009:110-120. Yannoulatos also suggests that 'Incarnation, Transfiguration, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Pentecost, and eschatological expectations: these are not merely tenets of church doctrine but constitute fundamental principles of thought and action that determine the ethos and mould the conscious and the subconscious mind of the faithful, who in turn become agents of culture' (2003:96).

Once again, humanity stands before the mystery of existence. Once again, we experience the world joyfully and we see its beauty and harmony as God's gift. Once again, we give thanks. And in this thanksgiving, praise, and joy, we once again become genuine human beings... as they watch the priest sprinkling volleys of blessed water throughout the church, and those glittering drops fly as if throughout the whole world, making that world once again a possibility and a promise, the raw material for a mysterious miracle of transformation and transfiguration. God himself entered this water in the form of a man; He united himself not only with humanity, but with all matter, and made all of it a radiant, lightbearing stream flowing toward life and joy. (1994:64, 65)

If our liturgical lives contribute to the destruction of the environment, they are in direct contradiction to the 'eschatological recapitulation of all things in God' of which Bulgakov and Andronikof speak so often. Liturgy must help us recognise the sanctity of creation and the activity of the Spirit at work within it, while at the same time calling us to cleanse and purify the parts of creation that have been polluted through our sinful activity. To silence the praise of creation is to silence the voice of the Spirit.

Yet in several ways this activity of blessing remains ambiguous and points to an important ambivalence that has already been encountered in the earlier discussion of sin and is made evident again in the liturgy for Theophany. The tradition is not clear about the effect of sin on the rest of the cosmos. At times, sin is read as an exclusively human issue: Only humans have sinned, only humans require redemption (and thus require a human saviour). The rest of creation remains innocent. Yet at other times sin is read as affecting the entire cosmos: The waters, indeed the whole earth, are affected by human pollution and are under the power of evil spirits. Thus they require cleansing and possibly even redemption by Christ. The activity of blessing displays similar ambivalence: Maybe creation is good and filled with the spirit and thus sacramental actions acknowledge and receive this holiness with which God has imbued matter. Or maybe creation is occupied by powers of evil and requires cleansing and blessing in order to make it useful for sacramental application. Both themes are present to some extent, both realities are acknowledged at different times.

And a similar ambiguity is expressed in almost all writings on ecology and has emerged also in the present treatment. On the one hand, seeing humans as somehow fundamentally different than other creatures and separate from the rest of creation easily leads to an interpretation that sees them as superior to everything and able (even obligated) to rule over it and 'improve' it, leading to implicit or explicit license to do with other creatures as we wish. Humans are no longer seen as creatures intimately connected to the cycle of life and it becomes possible to express their creation, sinful actions, salvation and final destiny in purely spiritual terms that sever almost any connection with the rest of the created order and express no concern for the redemption of all creatures (again with dire ecological consequences). On the other hand, merely showing that humans are somehow connected to the rest of creation does not lead to action on behalf of the rest of creation and can in some sense even detract from it. Ecological thinking also needs a focus on human responsibility: a recognition of sinful exploitation and an affirmation that action on behalf of the environment is necessary and possible. And to express this responsibility usually appeal is made precisely to the imagery that sees humans as distinctive: as guardians, stewards, or priests of creation, as the ones who can affect the creation both

negatively and positively in a way that other creatures cannot (or at least do not).<sup>340</sup> The fact that it is God who blesses should not imply that humans need not do anything on behalf of creation—or worse, that they can happily go on polluting and exploiting it. Any such pollution is sinful and destroys God’s good creation. Humans have a responsibility to stop their defilement of the ground and the waters, to repent of their sins, to turn around and remedy their acts as much as possible. While this surely is not ‘improvement’ of creation, it does imply a special human task, precisely because of prior human action that has affected creation negatively.

For an ecological theology both of these must be held in tension and indeed both are evident in the liturgy. On the one hand, the liturgies for all the feasts see humans as an integral part of creation: All of creation praises together, all of creation is affected by sin and evil and all of creation is redeemed. And much of this study has attempted to highlight the role of non-human creation more fully and to interpret major theological affirmations as applying to non-human creation in a wider sense than has been recognised in the past, to ‘extend’ incarnation and theosis to all creatures and see it as not focused solely on humans. In this sense, an ecological theology based in the liturgy highlights God’s redemptive action on behalf of all of creation instead of focusing it exclusively on human beings. Yet, on the other hand, the liturgy also is addressed specifically to humans. It calls humans to repentance, to celebration and to transformation of their lives. An ecological theology based in the liturgy thus sees human destruction of the earth as sinful and requiring repentance. It calls us to aid the poor most affected by our sinful ways of living and to have compassion on all creatures, to understand that all creatures are beloved, redeemed, and sanctified by God. The great blessing of waters, the blessings of fruits and flowers, can then become *both* a Paschal affirmation of life, a recognition of God’s good creation, a joining in the praise of all creatures *and* a call to cleanse what our sins have polluted, to act on behalf of the poor and outcast of all species, to relieve suffering and prevent death as far as is in our power and through the help and guidance of the Spirit of life. The blessings of Theophany and of the Transfiguration then might be helpful in a dual sense: on the one hand in the recognition that creation is indeed already sacred, that it reveals God’s glory and that it is more aware of God than we are: it exhorts us to praise and worship. This creation must therefore be treated as holy and not be despoiled and destroyed. In this sense, we are to see ourselves as part of it: not only we as humans are created, redeemed, sanctified, transfigured, but all of creation bears the divine life, participates in the incarnation, is redeemed by Christ and transfigured by the Spirit. On the other hand, the blessings also recognise that the earth has been affected by our sin and continues to be thus affected. In that respect, it requires healing and cleansing and blessing. Here blessing is understood as restoration and healing, not merely as recognition of God’s created beauty. In this sense, blessing must include human responsibility for restoration and cleansing of polluted land, water, and air. We cannot glibly talk of a ‘cosmic dimension of the liturgy’ and then go on to ignore the entire rest of creation. If we truly believe that God’s grace extends to all creatures, then the ways in

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<sup>340</sup> Of course the struggle for survival and procreation does actually lead species to compete with each other and even to eliminate each other. Yet this does not lead to the wholesale destruction characteristic of human action since the industrial revolution. Maybe the difference even here is a matter of degree not of genuinely qualitative distinction.

which we interact with and treat other creatures matters tremendously and then we cannot see ourselves as somehow separate from the rest of creation or able to do without it both physically and spiritually. If truly the very aim of the liturgy is to bring ‘earth’ and ‘heaven’ together, to reunite ‘physical’ and ‘spiritual’ (in a way that neither erases the material by ‘spiritualising’ it nor sees it as something to be left behind and overcome), then this must be evident in how we celebrate and how we treat all of creation. If the liturgy really makes present the eschaton—the deification and sanctification of all creation when God will be ‘all in all’—then our lives now must begin to make real this vision of harmony of Creator and creation. Do ‘things above’ really ‘keep feast with things below’ in our liturgies?



## CONCLUSION

This thesis has proposed an Orthodox ecological theology based in the liturgy. It employed Ricoeur's hermeneutics as an interpretative methodological tool for showing how contemporary concerns can be brought to ancient liturgical texts and practices by conceiving of liturgy as opening a world in which we are invited to imagine ourselves differently and are challenged to live more justly. The thesis has sought to show that non-human creatures are also invited into this world and have a legitimate place within it. The study has drawn on and sought to bring together several usually quite disparate fields: Eastern Patristics and more contemporary Orthodox theology, ecological theology (currently a predominantly Western field) and liturgical theology. It has thereby suggested that these fields can not only fruitfully interact, but can also provide a vision for an Orthodox ecological theology grounded in what most centrally shapes Orthodox theological identity: its liturgy. Several further conclusions can be drawn from this project:

First, in terms of methodology, contemporary hermeneutics as articulated by Ricoeur has been seen to be quite useful for articulating how liturgy functions, what meanings it conveys, and how it might shape our actions. This suggests that these Western methodological tools can be employed to gain insight about Eastern liturgy without violating its distinctive character.<sup>341</sup> Following Ricoeur, liturgical texts have been shown to 'open a world' and to envision new ways of being in the world. This is a 'poetic' world, characterised by heavy symbolism, paradoxical and 'polyphonic' statements, and limit-expressions. The 'worlds' of the liturgical celebrations challenge us to participate in them, enter into them and be shaped by them in ways that envision alternative patterns for our lives. The liturgical occasions seek to make sense of the struggles between concordance and discordance in our lives and to move us to action. The homilists envision such actions for the audiences in graphic terms: a changed lifestyle marked by compassion and care, especially for the poor.

But the thesis has also sought to show that new horizons can be brought to these liturgical worlds: The contemporary audience does not merely enter into an ancient world of no relevance to its own life, but it brings its own world to the text and the liturgical environment. The ecological crisis was the particular contemporary horizon brought to bear on the liturgical texts and actions in this study. Through the interaction between 'ecological world' and 'liturgical world' tensions have emerged in a variety of ways: with the firm conviction that death is eliminated in Christ's resurrection, with the centrality of the human in the liturgy, with the use of Adam as ultimate origin of evil, with an interpretation of holiness that seems to imply a dismissal of corporeality and the material world. Yet, as Ricoeur has maintained in regard to biblical texts, new meaning has emerged in this tension and friction of confrontation: a vision of life that includes the welfare and harmony of all created beings, an interpretation of the incarnation that affirms all flesh and matter, a reading

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<sup>341</sup> While no attempt has been made here to draw implications for Western liturgical approaches, the study may well suggest that hermeneutics might prove a useful tool also for them. I have explored this possibility more fully in Appendix II and in my article 'Toward a Ricoeurian Hermeneutics of Liturgy' forthcoming in *Worship*.

of symbols of evil that grapples with the complexities of the current ecological destruction, and a vision of theosis that includes the hallowing of all of creation.

Second, also in regard to methodology, this study has suggested that liturgy can indeed prove a significant source for theological reflection. This is something that has been suggested by liturgical scholars for years (liturgy as ‘primary theology’; see Appendix II), yet their discipline has often been marginalised as concerned only with ‘practical’ matters and not with ‘serious’ theological analysis (i.e. systematic theology). Yet doctrinal questions emerge out of, are deeply informed by, and in turn shape liturgical texts and practices. A theology disconnected from the practice of the church loses its moorings and its mission. I hope to have shown that an examination of liturgy can indeed lead to rigorous theological thinking and doctrinal reflection: The feast of Great and Holy Pascha not only speaks of Christ’s crucifixion, resurrection and victory over death, but opens important questions of soteriology. The feasts of the Theotokos and of Nativity address explicitly christological issues surrounding Christ’s incarnation and the implications of this incarnation for us. Much of Great Lent is an extended poetic reflection on hamartiology: sin, defilement, repentance and forgiveness. The feasts of Theophany and of the Transfiguration open thinking about baptism, sanctification, holiness and eschatology. Major theological doctrines are hence intimately connected to liturgical celebration. Although they are not fully formulated within the liturgical texts, insight about such doctrines can be gained by examining (and experiencing) the festal cycle as it is celebrated each year. Although the theological exercise is in a sense a secondary discourse that requires its own tools and rigour, liturgy can indeed serve as an impetus and ‘primary source’ for such reflection. And ultimately theological thinking must return to and be consistent with the life of the church as it is expressed in its liturgical work.

Third, the contemporary concerns have been brought *to* the ancient texts while guarding as much as possible from reading contemporary concerns back *into* the texts. Contemporary Orthodox theology is deeply indebted to the Patristic tradition and often very hesitant of any approaches that might seem to question its authority or primacy. I have tried to demonstrate that an Orthodox theology can think rigorously about contemporary questions without thereby becoming unfaithful to the tradition or the oft-invoked ‘mind of the Fathers’. Contemporary Orthodox theology is deeply indebted to what has been called the ‘neo-Patristic synthesis’, championed by such thinkers as Georges Florovsky and Vladimir Lossky. It has been overall rather hesitant to engage in more creative or speculative theological thinking, often thought to be represented by such thinkers as Sergius Bulgakov, of whom Florovsky, Lossky and Schmemmann were quite critical. While that is a controversy which I cannot explore any further here, my aim has been to confront contemporary theological questions, such as those raised by the ecological crisis, which did not pose themselves to the Patristic age, and to engage them seriously and openly, including a conscious dialogue with contemporary Western theology.<sup>342</sup> Such genuine dialogue and creative exploration, I want to insist, need not be unfaithful to the tradition as represented by the ‘Patristic mind’. We always *interpret* the ancient texts even in straightforward Patristic study of an individual thinker for its own sake. Interpretation that is open to

contemporary concerns need neither distort the texts nor pretend that their authors have already answered all questions—including ones which never arose for them.

Furthermore, liturgy is absolutely central to Orthodox identity and my study has sought to take liturgy seriously as it is actually celebrated instead of proposing a complete overhaul or replacement of traditional forms and texts (as often happens in Protestant treatments where liturgy is not as firmly fixed as in the Eastern tradition).<sup>343</sup> New questions can be brought to the liturgical texts without pretending that they already answer them, but also without rejecting them or forcing insight from them in a violent manner. Ecological theology need not start from scratch or be exercised in a vacuum without connection to traditional texts and doctrines. References to non-human creation are indeed present in the liturgical texts and actions, although they are not a major concern for liturgy or homilists. Theological reflection can enter into conversation with these references already present and draw out fuller implications from them.

Most importantly, of course, the study has aimed at articulating an Orthodox ecological theology. Such a theology, I have contended, requires not only a fuller notion of ‘cosmic redemption’—a term often bandied about but seldom explicated in any rigorous fashion—but also a real theological place for non-human creatures in theological thinking in all its facets: christology, soteriology, hamartiology, pneumatology, eschatology, ecclesiology. While not all these issues have been addressed in the same detail or to the same extent, the thesis has attempted to argue especially for more inclusive notions of incarnation and of theosis, two doctrines absolutely central to Eastern theology. It has been critical of contemporary Orthodox attempts to phrase human responsibility for creation solely in terms of a ‘priesthood’ for creation that seems to exclude any direct relationship between God and non-human creatures. It has also questioned interpretations of the *imago Dei* that seem to imply that humans are somehow fundamentally different from the rest of creation and practically identical to the divine, suggesting instead that the *imago Dei* is more correctly applied to Christ and that such an interpretation need not exclude other creatures from the effects worked by Christ’s incarnation. In regard to theosis, the thesis has been critical of eschatological proposals that are concerned solely with human redemption or deification and see the rest of creation included only in an ‘hypostasised’ fashion via the human. I have sought to show that all of creation is open to God’s grace and hallowed and sanctified by the Spirit. In both respects, however, the proposals have only opened the discussion and much more work needs to be done to flesh this out fully.

The study has *not* attempted to show that a fully-formed or even partially articulated ecological theology can *already* be found in the liturgy or in the Patristic literature. Nor has it argued that non-human creatures are a major concern of the ancient texts. Instead, it has sought to show that when examined very carefully the liturgical texts *do not exclude* non-human creatures and that therefore a place for them can be articulated that takes account of them more fully and more consciously than the liturgical and homiletic texts ever did. The most fully stated place for non-human creation in the liturgy is clearly that of praise of God. Yet

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<sup>342</sup> Indeed, the current ecological concerns may well prove an important locus for reinvigorating ecumenical (and even inter-religious) dialogue. The diversity in the debate so far certainly suggests as much.

I have suggested that to be consistent such praise implies that all creatures are valued by God for their own sake and related to the divine directly without requiring mediation by a human ‘priesthood’. Furthermore, there are hints (although they are ambivalent) that the larger creation is not merely a ‘back-drop’ for the human drama but also involved in it in some way, that humans cannot be absolutely separated from the rest of creation in the ways in which we often do so in thought and practice. Human sin affects the rest of creation and hence redemption must also be more cosmic in scope than the merely human. The blessing of water at Theophany and other blessing ceremonies suggest both that creation is good and filled with grace, hence already hallowed by the Spirit, and that it has been affected by evil and requires cleansing and redemption. In this way we are shown to be an intimate part of the larger cosmos and our destiny cannot be separated from it. All these implications for ecological theology, however, have to be articulated and argued—they are not simply already present.

The particular nature of liturgy has also shown to be useful for ecological theology in particular ways. I have repeatedly pointed to the ways in which liturgy is focused on the present despite (or actually flowing out of) its anamnestic and eschatological character. This suggests that some of the obsessive focus on questions of origins and ends in the contemporary science and religion debate (i.e. with the beginning and final end of the universe) might be misplaced and will not necessarily help us resolve current ecological issues. Although these are interesting questions, liturgy can help us focus their implications more fully on our present actions. The eschaton matters because of the ‘world’ it opens for us, because of the vision of how we are to live that it suggests to us. Liturgically, we behave in certain ways now in anticipation of what will be. The eschaton is to become actual in our present liturgical celebration. It thus gives a real impetus for our action and behaviour here and now. Because the eschatological future is one that affirms life and the harmony of all creation, this vision is to be instantiated in the present if we are serious that the eschaton breaks in within the liturgy. And this can happen through ascetic practices, which anticipate this future reality and seek to make it a present one. If our eschatological ‘world’ gives a genuine place to non-human creatures and if liturgy truly shapes who we are and how we are to live, then these creatures are eminently significant also in our lives here and now, worthy of our compassion, valuable in their own right. This also helps us get away from a mere focus on texts to one that stresses liturgical actions and behaviour, as is considered important by most contemporary liturgical theology (see Appendix II).

The study has evidently not proposed concrete ‘solutions’ to the climate crisis or even given specific ethical guidelines for particular actions, although it certainly has pointed to such implications repeatedly. Instead it has sought to show more generally that non-human creatures can and should occupy a serious place in theological thinking about central doctrinal questions and that drawing on liturgical occasions can help us formulate the ways to do so. And this is a result that goes beyond the particular contemporary ecological concern. Maybe the ecological crisis can become an occasion for us to rethink much more seriously the role of other creatures in our faith and theologies? In the course of Christian history, non-human creation has usually

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<sup>343</sup> This does not, of course, address any of the questions and debates in regard to ‘reform’ of the liturgy in any shape or

only been considered in doctrines of creation and even there it has not received extended treatment (usually far more attention has been paid to angels or the question of providence than to the reality and fate of animals or plants). Although the term ‘cosmic redemption’ or ‘cosmic liturgy’ has been employed and the terms ‘cosmos’ and ‘earth’ appear relatively frequently in liturgical texts, little effort has been expended on articulating exactly how redemption might be cosmic in scope. This is an important question in its own right and not dependent only on the fact that we are destroying the planet and eliminating much of its created life. Non-human creation is worthy of theological attention for its own sake, not only when it becomes endangered in its existence.

Much remains to be addressed in this context: Other studies have to some extent already engaged questions of Eucharist or sacraments more generally in the context of ecological theology. Some have also pointed to the importance of icons for a rethinking of corporeality and materiality. These are absolutely central to the Orthodox liturgical experience, as is the ecclesial space in which liturgy takes place. This particular study of the feasts should now be brought together with and connected to these more general reflections on Orthodox sacramental life. Furthermore, no attention could be paid to other liturgical occasions with ‘ecological potential’ such as the prayers over fields and animals or canons regulating daily life including treatment of non-human nature.<sup>344</sup> All these deserve to be examined for an even fuller articulation of Orthodox ecological theology that also pushes some of the doctrinal suggestions even further than could be accomplished here.

In conclusion, I have hoped to show that Orthodox theology can address contemporary questions rigorously and deeply without abandoning its theological and liturgical integrity. Orthodox theology is not in mortal combat either with modern science or with a concern for social justice in all its facets. These are not ‘liberal’ issues of no relevance to the committed believer. The ecological crisis threatens our very survival on this planet God has created and the survival of many other species who are subjects of God’s loving care and concern. Liturgy most fundamentally challenges us to live differently, to envision our lives in light of the coming kingdom and to enact this kingdom and its peaceful practices within our communal lives. This kingdom has a place for all God’s creatures and thus their survival and flourishing are of real concern to us if we take liturgy seriously as a celebration of ‘the life of the world’. This world encompasses all of God’s creatures, human and non-human, animate and inanimate, earthly and cosmic. God creates, redeems and sanctifies the entire universe. A truly *cosmic* liturgy, then, is by definition also ecological, concerned with all of God’s *oikoumene*.

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<sup>344</sup> Two important liturgical texts should also be examined further: the Akathist to Creation ‘Glory to God in All Things’, composed by Protopresbyter Gregory Petrov in a Russian prison camp in 1940, and the new service for the environment, which Patriarch Dimitrios instituted in 1989 to be celebrated on Sept. 1 each year (with texts composed by Father Gerasimos of the Holy Mountain). The Akathist is a beautiful tribute to creation’s praise of its Creator, including suggestions that creation guides us and provides an example for us. The service for the environment is in many ways rather disappointing: it is intensely anthropocentric and contains basically no reflection on creation for its own sake. Almost all prayers are concerned only with repercussions for and the welfare of human beings, although there are some (fairly weak) indications that environmental destruction might be sinful. In either case, both texts deserve much fuller exploration.

## APPENDIX I

### ECOLOGICAL THEOLOGY: LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 1. Introduction

Although ecological theology is a relatively recent field of theological study, it no longer has to justify its existence. Evidence for environmental degradation, such as pollution, decimation of species, water and energy deficiencies, deforestation, and especially global climate change,<sup>345</sup> is now abundant and only denied by the most ideologically motivated detractors. We live on a planet in peril and it is a peril of our own making. Increasingly, theologians are recognising that Christian theology has to come to terms with this pressing issue. Ecological issues raise important questions for contemporary theology for several reasons. First, it has been argued, initially by historian Lynn White, that Christianity is responsible for the ecological crisis (1967:1203-1207). The marriage of science and technology by a Christian West that had deprived nature of mystery and sacrality and followed the biblical injunction of subduing the earth, gave rise to the industrial and technological development that is today ravaging the planet. If this is true, Christian theology has to face up to this responsibility and must change the way it relates to the environment. At the very least, it has to respond to the charge. The earliest theological engagements with ecological questions tend to be a response to White's argument.

Secondly, the rise of science and especially its general acceptance as the most convincing (or possibly the only) version of truth challenges the coherence of the Christian worldview in many different ways. No longer can we believe in a literal Adam and Eve or in a historical fall that is the cause of evil in the world. Theology must come to terms with scientific evidence about the age of the universe and its emergence and evolution over billions of years. The insights of contemporary physics and biology challenge many Christian assumptions about what it means to be human, including our supposed distinctiveness from all other creatures and nature as a whole. It also puts into question many traditional versions of Christian eschatology, since what we now know about the end of the universe is a rather bleak picture. Of course we can attempt to close our eyes to this and proceed with business as usual. Yet that will simply confirm the conviction of many people today that theology is ultimately out-of-date and irrelevant to contemporary questions. Instead, many theologians think that theology has a responsibility to take these contemporary concerns seriously. It can

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<sup>345</sup> I refrain from using the term 'global warming' since global climate change (which does involve an overall warming of the atmosphere) often gives rise to extreme weather patterns which can in some places result in colder weather and more rain. Hence an especially cold winter is not evidence that there is no global 'warming'. While there is complete scientific consensus about the general warming of the atmosphere as a result of increased carbon emissions, there is much debate about the extent of the warming, about its concrete repercussions on weather patterns and sea level rise, about the time remaining to combat at least some of its most dire implications, and regarding to what extent so-called 'feedback loops' or 'feedback mechanisms' will accelerate the warming (for example, such as the melting of permafrost due to the warming of the poles, which releases great amounts of methane into the atmosphere and thereby significantly accelerates the overall warming trend). See the publications of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), of the WorldWatch Institute, and of the various national science boards for the most recent information.

neither ignore the valid insights of other disciplines nor simply capitulate to them and give up its own convictions and tradition.

And increasingly contemporary theologians are calling for such engagement. The dialogue between religion and science is one aspect of this discussion, usually dealing with quantum physics or evolutionary biology and the compatibility with Christian faith, but increasingly also happening in the fields of psychology, neuroscience, and many others (Peacocke, 1979, 1993; Peacocke & Clayton, 2004; Pannenberg, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1988, 1994; Jeeves & Berry, 1998; Primavesi, 2000, 2003; Southgate, 2005; Cootsona, 2002; Shults, 2008; Albertson & King, 2010). Unfortunately, this dialogue has not often taken up environmental questions. Yet, this is beginning to change. The past twenty years have seen an increasingly wider discussion of environmental issues and attempts to formulate Christian responses from a wide variety of perspectives. Today ecological theology is admitted as a valid and important subdiscipline of theology. Many theologians have begun to engage ecological questions seriously, such as Jürgen Moltmann, Rosemary Radford Ruether, John Haught, Sallie McFague, Arthur Peacocke, Celia Deane-Drummond, and others. Various proposals have been set forth for how theology is to respond to the environmental crisis and to the insights of contemporary science.

Besides the basic concern to lay out that Christianity is not fundamentally incompatible with ecology and the defence that it is not or is only partly responsible for creating the environmental crisis, contemporary ecological theology tends to fall into one or several of four categories: a) process theology (especially as an attempt to take contemporary science seriously), b) ecofeminism, c) ecojustice (ecology from the viewpoint of various liberation theologies), and d) environmental ethics (often including reflection on animal rights). These are not hard and fast categories, as there is also significant overlap. On the one hand, social ecology or ecojustice with its fundamental call for social justice has many ethical implications. Ecofeminism and ecojustice also often closely overlap, as there is a recognition that poor women are the ones most affected by environmental devastation. On the other hand, some ecofeminist thinkers, such as Sallie McFague, Rosemary Radford Ruether and especially Catherine Keller, embrace aspects of process thought. And process theology itself also has implications for ethics, especially insofar as it is postulated as a response to the question of evil. Yet, despite these significant areas of overlap, the four also constitute distinct emphases with arguments particular to them. Finally, and most recently, some systematic theologians have also begun rethinking central doctrines of the faith in light of environmental issues. Here the concern is no longer primarily ethical, but more systematic. It begins with a rethinking of the doctrine of creation, but also goes on to consider how doctrines of incarnation, christology, hamartiology, soteriology, pneumatology and eschatology might be affected if ecological concerns are taken as essential for theological thinking. After reviewing these various approaches, this survey will conclude with a brief consideration of Eastern Orthodox writings on ecology.

## 2. Earliest responses: Does Christianity teach exploitation of nature?

Most of the earliest writings on environmental questions and Christianity tried to address the charge that Christianity is responsible for the ecological crisis. As already mentioned, White argues that the

combination of science and technology that has led to the current devastation of the planet only arose in Western Europe because of that culture's Christian convictions which enjoined a violent domination of nature (justified by the language of dominion in Genesis and the notion that humans are made in God's image), which de-sacralized nature (e.g., in Christian destruction of sacred groves) and in general separated the material from the spiritual. White is sweeping in his remarks, which apart from the questionable attribution of historical causality are little substantiated in his text. Yet, other thinkers joined him in making Western Christian faith responsible for the violent exploitation of nature and for its negative attitude to the material world in general (Kauffman, 1972, 2004; Sherrard, 1987). Christian thinkers responded to these charges in various ways, often by admitting that they were at least partially true.<sup>346</sup> Ian Bradley was one of the earliest thinkers to address White's charge (1990).<sup>347</sup> He argues that the interpretation of the image of God as implying dominion over and exploitation of creation is false, providing a biblical analysis that says that all animals have inherent value and that the land should not be exploited. Nature is not profane, but there is a mutual and reciprocal relation between God and nature. Nature praises God. It does not become evil through the fall, but our sin does affect it. He cites Irish and other saints as examples of good stewardship, advocating love for all creation. His treatment ends with several basic 'practical suggestions for greening the churches'.

Similarly, Deane-Drummond's earliest book on this topic (1996) summarises biblical approaches to creation (refuting White) and then gives examples from Celtic Christianity and Hildegard von Bingen.<sup>348</sup> One of the most well-known US texts, which grew out of the advocacy of the World Council of Churches in regard to the 'integrity of creation', also begins with a review of Scripture and tradition, before going on to consider ethical questions and implications from liberation theology (Birch et al., 1990).<sup>349</sup> Similarly, the collection *Christianity and Ecology*, edited by Elizabeth Beuilly and Martin Palmer, first provides a couple biblical perspectives and then gives examples from the monastic tradition, St. Francis, and the Protestant tradition (1991).<sup>350</sup> James Nash's well-known book *Loving Nature* follows a parallel pattern of retrieving Scripture and

<sup>346</sup> So Sean McDonagh agrees with White to a large extent and thus calls for a 'new theology' (1986). Ecofeminist thinkers also often chastise the Christian tradition for its simultaneous oppression of women and nature. (For a discussion of these two positions see below).

<sup>347</sup> Adrian Hough somewhat qualifies the claim Bradley makes that 'God is green': 'My answer is, that the God who created the world and who continues to care for that world is "green", if by this we mean that He is in tune with and works for all that is natural and good and cares for the environment. On the other hand, God is not "green", if by this we imply that he is the product of the "Green Movement" and that traditional Christian understanding is so seriously flawed that we have to recreate our image and understanding of God' (1997:3-4). He goes on to develop a theology of nature in light of the Christian doctrines of creation and redemption.

<sup>348</sup> The book is designed as a workbook, including questions for reflection, and surveys the main areas in which Christian faith might interact with ecological concerns. Deane-Drummond had already authored several works on bioethics, before engaging ecology more directly.

<sup>349</sup> The connection between care for creation and concern for the poor is very strong in any engagement inspired by the WCC, as ecological concerns are considered under its basic theme of 'Peace, Justice, and the Integrity of Creation'. Orbis Books seems to have a firm commitment to ecological theology, as a large percentage of publications on this topic are issued by this (Roman Catholic) publisher.

<sup>350</sup> It includes two chapters on Scripture, a chapter on (Benedictine) Monasticism, a chapter on St. Francis, a (rather critical) chapter on the Protestant Tradition, and one Orthodox contribution, finishing with an evaluation of the church's role in treating 'the earth's sickness'. Paul Santmire (1985) provides a much more positive reading of the Protestant tradition. Although he finds that Christian theology holds only 'ambiguous' promise for ecology, he divides the tradition in rather dualistic fashion into two emphases: either a 'spiritual' model of ascent which he judges world-denying and



the tradition, before going on to provide a more explicitly ethical paradigm of love for nature (1991). This approach is also followed by Liedke (1984) and in the essays collected in Altner (1989). The Roman Catholic Church, at first rather reluctant about this new environmental movement, finally declared St. Francis the patron saint of ecology and has more recently often advocated action on behalf of creation.<sup>351</sup>

Many treatments have focused specifically on Genesis and especially on the notion of stewardship and the image of God, trying to argue that neither notion implies exploitation of nature. The most thorough re-reading of the notion of the image of God is provided by Douglas Hall in several works, in which he argues that a more positive reading of a 'verbal connotation' of the image can be recovered for a Christian notion of stewardship (1986, 1990).<sup>352</sup> A focus on Scripture is especially evident in writings from the evangelical Protestant traditions, which are also beginning to address the topic (Fowler, 1995; Bouma-Prediger, 1995; Beisner, 1997; Berry, 2000; McGrath, 2002; Brown, 2006; Spencer & White, 2007). David Fergusson reviews the notion of creation in the Scriptures for a more explicit engagement with evolutionary theory (1998).<sup>353</sup> While some thinkers are becoming increasingly critical of the theological doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* which is not found in Scripture, he insists that this doctrine is essential and not antithetical to a positive attitude toward creation.<sup>354</sup> There are many other theologians who attempt an ecological retrieval of the doctrine of creation.<sup>355</sup> Some focus on various thinkers or systems in the ecclesial tradition instead of focusing only on Scripture, thus Bergmann for Gregory Nazianzen (2005), Mar Gregorios for Gregory of Nyssa, (1980), Keselopoulos for Symeon the New Theologian (2001), and most recently Jenkins for a variety of thinkers (Aquinas, Barth, Maximus, Bulgakov) and their respective 'ecologies of grace' (2008). Besides these manifold attempts to show from Scripture and tradition that Christianity is not essentially earth-denying and

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unhelpful for ecology (and which he finds primarily in the Eastern and Catholic tradition) or a descent and migration motif that affirms God's goodness in the world and thus is useful. This latter positive attitude he finds in a reading of Augustine, St. Francis, and several Reformation thinkers.

<sup>351</sup> Pope John Paul II declared St. Francis the patron saint of ecology on Nov. 19, 1979. Much contemporary writing on ecological theology (especially in the US) is Roman Catholic. McDonagh was one of the first to call for Roman Catholic engagement with ecological questions in his *To Care for the Earth* where he strongly criticises the lack of concern for the earth in official church positions. He provides a review of 'green positions' in Scripture and the tradition in his *The Greening of the Church* (1990), where he also discusses several Roman Catholic documents, and articulates a green spirituality in his most recent work (2003). For a more recent collection of US Roman Catholic thought on theology, which includes several official statements by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, see Christiansen & Grazer (1996).

<sup>352</sup> John Reumann provides a thorough account of the notion of economy and stewardship in Scripture and the Western tradition (1992). See also Tri Robinsons's book on environmental stewardship (2006).

<sup>353</sup> The doctrine of creation is of course also treated by many biblical scholars (e.g., Clifford & Collins, 1992; Murray, 1992; Simkins, 1994). Several of these include some consideration of the environment. Biblical scholars have also explicitly engaged environmental questions (DeWitt, 1991; Habel, 1995, 2000-2010 [5 vols.]; Bergant, 1998; Dempsey & Pazdan, 2004; Bernstein, 2005; Wainwright et al., 2009:13-23; Hillel, 2006; Habel & Trudinger, 2008; Horrell et al., 2010; see also the essays on Scripture in Altner, 1989).

<sup>354</sup> Many theologians have pointed out that the notion of *ex nihilo* does not appear in the Bible. Some (especially process thinkers) wish to reject it altogether as the main culprit of ecological devastation because it posits God as separate from creation, while others think that the notion is absolutely essential for a positive view of creation. Fergusson's defence of *ex nihilo* is found in chapters 2 and 4. For one particular virulent attack on the doctrine *ex nihilo*, which mixes process thought, postmodern philosophy and feminist theology, see Keller (2003).

<sup>355</sup> The most prominent of these is probably Moltmann's Gifford lectures in 1984-1985 (1985), especially chapter 4. It also involves a discussion of the meaning of the *imago dei*. Several of the texts mentioned above that seek to engage contemporary science also fall in this category, as do most process theologies (see next section).

does not enjoin exploitation of the planet, more recent ecological theology has tried to develop more proactive theological stances while often also including a significant amount of critique in regard to the tradition. These include process theologies, feminist theologies, and liberation theologies. All have engaged ecological concerns to a larger or lesser extent.

### 3. Process thought

One might consider the Roman Catholic thinker Teilhard de Chardin an early exponent of the kind of thinking espoused by process theologians, although few appeal to him.<sup>356</sup> Process theology is based on the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne. Many of the thinkers that seek to approach Christian faith from a scientific perspective see process thought as a particular useful way of bringing the insights of contemporary science and Christianity together. Very few of these thinkers are solely or even primarily concerned with ecological questions, but they usually have the more general concern of providing a coherent Christian theology that is compatible with the current scientific worldview.<sup>357</sup> The most significant of these thinkers for ecological theology are John Haught, Charles Birch, and Jay McDaniel. Haught argues that we suffer from a 'cosmic homelessness' and thus advocates a 'religion of adventure' that will be able to recover a sense of belonging to the universe (in Birch et al., 1990; in Barnes, 1994; 1993; 2000).<sup>358</sup> Much process thought speaks of God as the divine Lure or Mystery who calls us from the future toward Godself and redeems all suffering by keeping it eternally in the divine memory (e.g., McDaniel, 1995:102).<sup>359</sup> God is not conceived as utterly other from creation and transcendent to it, thus creation *ex nihilo* is rejected. Rather, God is intimately involved in the world and in some sense 'becomes' through the very process of evolution.<sup>360</sup> God evolves with the world and the world affects God. This is a caring and intimate God.<sup>361</sup> This view of God's relation with the world is often called panentheism: God is neither identical with the world (as in pantheism) nor utterly distinguished from it (as in classical Christian theism), but 'in, with and under' it.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Teilhard was one of the first Catholic thinkers to take evolution seriously and to develop a Christian theology that would take full account of it. He is also sensitive to ecological issues. See especially his *Hymn of the Universe* (1991). For a good secondary source, see King (2005).

<sup>357</sup> This is especially true of Philip Clayton who sees process thought as a way of making Christian faith compatible with science and to respond to the problem of evil. The theodicy provided by process thought, however, is not very convincing to many thinkers (in face of the enormity of evil it must include in God's memory).

<sup>358</sup> Birch also advocates process thought as useful for a new thinking about God that interprets God as lover of the world and the world present in God (Birch et al., 1990, chapter 13). The collection also includes a chapter by McDaniel (chapter 15).

<sup>359</sup> Page is critical of this. She points to the great number of extinctions which 'must give us pause if God is said to be exerting a lure' (in Clayton & Peacocke, 2004:227).

<sup>360</sup> Often process thought seems curiously ignorant of the most basic Christian positions. Morowitz argues, for example, that 'the philosophical view [of panentheism] that I have defended can be described as trinitarian, since it consists of the three moments of immanence, emergence, and transcendence. This 'trinity' maps onto the trinity of the origin of the universe, the origin of life, and the origin of mind. If one requires a scriptural deity in addition, the panentheistic view becomes quaternarian' (in Clayton & Peacocke, 2004:135). Surely the mere mention of a tri-fold scientific structure does not equate with the Christian Trinity.

<sup>361</sup> Often the Holy Spirit is seen as a particularly appropriate category for this vision of the divine. See Eleanore Rae's response to Mark I. Wallace's contribution in Hessel & Ruether (2000).

<sup>362</sup> For a thorough treatment of various panentheistic positions see the essays in Clayton and Peacocke (2004). It must be said, however, that what is rejected as 'classical theism' often is a straw man never advocated in that form by anyone in

For many of these thinkers such a view of God's intimate involvement with the cosmos calls us to care similarly about the creation and all its creatures. Haught argues that 'we may find the core ingredients of an ecologically responsive theology at the very centrepiece of biblical faith, namely, in its consistent confidence that all of reality exists within the embrace of God's promise... additionally, the exhortations to practice the virtues of love, humility, moderation, detachment, justice, and gratitude are of perennial relevance to ecological ethics' (2000:149). He suggests that we rethink nature as 'promise' and link its flourishing much more firmly to an eschatological hope than done previously (154-155). McDaniel derives a theology of care for animals from this perspective (1989, 1990, 1995). He tries to develop a theological vision that would be 'good news' even for suffering animals and finds in process theology and some near-Eastern religious contributions the most successful tools for doing so. He seeks to find a balance between 'rootless consumerism' and 'wingless fundamentalism' by rereading the biblical accounts for evidence both of 'green grace', i.e., a spirituality more rooted in the earth, and 'red grace', which can take account of the reality of evil and suffering (1995). Ruth Page's pansyntheism is parallel to these concerns in many ways (1996).<sup>363</sup> She presents God as accompanying all of creation and rejects many traditional theological assumptions. Yet, she argues explicitly against process theology and rather wants to speak of God as 'companioning' the world and being in fundamental relationship with it.<sup>364</sup> We must work together with God, but God will not give up on creation, even if we destroy it (this is less clear in process thought, where God is more fully at the mercy of destructive forces). John Cobb is a particularly interesting example of process thought, as he tries to combine it with political theology, relying especially on the theology of Johann Baptist Metz. He explains that 'for process theology, as an ecological theology, human beings are part of nature. We are a very special part with peculiar capacities and value. But we came into being at a late point in the evolutionary process and we will some day be gone. That will not be the end of the world, only of humanity.' He contends that 'here humanity is seen within an interconnected nature, all of which is made up of prehensive unifications or occasions of

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the tradition and what is proposed as 'soteriological panentheism' or 'qualified panentheism' is, in fact, rather close to basic tenets of the 'classical' Christian tradition. Thus, while the three Orthodox thinkers included in the collection seem happy to embrace the term, what they explicate are 'classic' Orthodox positions. The same is true of some of the Western thinkers (such as Edwards and Deane-Drummond, to some extent also Peacocke). The only 'radically new' version of panentheism is that of process thought (which is rejected by all of the contributors just mentioned). Surely to call this a 'great revolution' in Christian theology, as Clayton (and to some extent Brierley) does, is overstating the case.

<sup>363</sup> See also her chapter 'Panentheism and Pansyntheism' in Clayton and Peacocke (2004). She summarises her position as follows: 'The picture involved in this doctrine of creation is not one of God setting up the initial conditions with the express design to produce complexity and human consciousness and intelligence, but rather one of God letting be whatever would and could emerge from that freedom, and enjoying all responses of all kinds as they have occurred from the beginning of time, with their various qualities, of which intelligence is one' (1996:80).

<sup>364</sup> Page is quite clear in her critique of process thought throughout her book, yet her heavy emphasis on the freedom of creation does bring her close to some of its positions. She is emphatic that God's love extends to all of creation, not merely to humans: 'At the base of the whole argument in this book lies God's *Gelassenheit* in freedom and *Mitsein* in love. But that divine being-with in otherness and intimacy is always total, since God's character is not diluted according to species, although the divine understanding is itself species-specific. Moreover, the relationship exists for all creation, not simply for the recently-arrived homo sapiens. If God can accommodate in relationship the infinite qualitative distinction between the divine and the human, there is not much more to ask of the divine in accommodating the rest of creation. The mutuality of God's participation here is the basis of the fulfilment of God's free and loving desire for instances of freedom and love, as far as these can be manifested in all the varieties of creatures with their genetic inheritance and changing, ambiguous circumstances' (1996:118).

experience. With the appearance of humanity whole new dimensions of reality came into being, but reality itself does not depend on human existence.’ Therefore, ‘process theology as an ecological theology is concerned about the whole course of nature’ (1982:118, 125, 126).<sup>365</sup> Thus, many of the thinkers committed to both process thought and ecological concerns tend to emphasise primarily ethical or political implications and their thought is hence often closely aligned with that of liberation theology.

#### 4. Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is probably the most prominent strain in this discussion and so far has produced the most work that seeks to bring together ecology and theology. At its most basic level ecofeminism recognises that historically (in philosophical, literary, cultural, psychological and many other ways) women have been more closely associated with nature than men. In fact, domination of nature and oppression of women are often linked in a variety of ways.<sup>366</sup> Karen Warren, one of the foremost philosophical ecofeminists, explicates this in terms of a value-hierarchical dualism (e.g., in Adams, 1993).<sup>367</sup> The tradition has often placed values in a dualist fashion (such as nature/culture, emotion/reason, matter/mind, body/soul, female/male, etc.) that looks like they are equal and complement each other. Yet, in fact, one side of the dualism (culture, reason, mind, soul, male) is thought to be superior to the other (nature, emotion, matter, body, female) and therefore subdues and exploits the other with relative impunity. Beyond this basic recognition of the historical connection between women and nature, many ecofeminists part company. There is a wide variety of different interpretations of the connection itself and even fundamental disagreement about whether the dualism and connection should be erased or whether women’s connection with nature could actually prove fruitful if it is no longer tied to inferiority and domination. Even among Christian ecofeminists one can still find a range of positions. Several collections that focus specifically on ecofeminism and religion have appeared (Adams, 1993; Green & Grey, 1994; Ruether, 1996; Baker-Fletcher, 1998; Grey, 2003; Eaton & Lorenzen, 2003; Eaton, 2005; Ress, 2006; Kearns & Keller, 2007). They bring together essays from many different perspectives and thinkers, including some non-Christian ones.

The most important and well-known ecofeminists are probably Rosemary Radford Ruether and Sallie McFague in the US and Anne Primavesi and Celia Deane-Drummond in the UK.<sup>368</sup> Catharina Halkes was one

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<sup>365</sup> Cobb is one of the earliest thinkers to realise that liberation theology must concern itself with ecology: ‘As long as justice and sustainability are viewed as antagonistic interests, sociological theology and ecological theology will work against each other, whereas they are both needed in a truly comprehensive political theology. They can work together only when, abandoning the trade-off mentality, the adherents of both rethink the requirements of both justice and sustainability so as to see that justice entails sustainability and sustainability entails justice’ (1982:128). In some sense, he can be said to attempt to bring together all four of the emphases discussed here: process thought, liberation or political theology, ethics, and even feminist thought. McDaniel also engages feminist concerns explicitly (1989:111-145).

<sup>366</sup> A very interesting example in this respect is Jane Caputi’s essay ‘Nuclear Power and the Sacred: Or Why a Beautiful Woman Is Like a Nuclear Power Plant’ (in Adams, 1993), which highlights heavily pornographic imagery used for bombs and nuclear energy.

<sup>367</sup> She makes the same argument in more detail in many primarily philosophical texts.

<sup>368</sup> Although Deane-Drummond always includes feminist concerns in her writings, this is not her exclusive interest and she is at times quite critical of certain aspects of ecofeminism. Her work is thus discussed more fully in various other places in this review (and the thesis itself). She provides two helpful introductions to the literature (1996, 2008). Her other work is either ethical (2004) or more systematic in nature (2009).

of the first to write on this topic and lays out the basic arguments for ecofeminism itself (1991).<sup>369</sup> She summarises Carolyn Merchant's work on the mechanisation of nature in the early modern period, pointing out how women are consistently associated with nature in the tradition and how the mastery of nature in the technology and rising science of the early modern period is put in violent feminine terms (such as the 'rape' of nature). She also reviews the basic philosophical language and imagery that affiliates women with nature in such thinkers as Plato, Aristotle, Francis Bacon, and Descartes. Overall, she contends, the image of God has been identified with the male mind, while woman is identified with the material and is exploited and suppressed. Primavesi carries this argument further (1991; 2000; 2003) and drawing on Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis proposes a very different way of relating to nature.<sup>370</sup> She especially objects to hierarchical models and focuses on the organic integrity and connectedness of all creatures which regards all of life as a gift.

Ruether's fundamental essay on ecofeminism has been re-printed in various forms in many different places and provides a basic introduction and historical overview of the ways in which women were treated in the ancient, medieval and modern periods, how they were likened to nature and how female metaphors were applied to nature (the identification always goes both ways).<sup>371</sup> In her *Gaia and God* she reviews classical near-Eastern creation stories (Babylonian, Hebrew, and Greek) and develops the contemporary scientific story in light of the Gaia hypothesis (1992). She also reviews the idea that the fall might be interpreted as a fall into patriarchy, although she considers the data for this as inconclusive (chapter 6). She proposes the Hebrew notion of covenant as a useful idea today for healing the world: 'A covenantal vision of the relation of humans to other life forms acknowledges the special place of humans in this relationship as caretakers, caretakers who did not create and do not absolutely own the rest of life, but who are ultimately accountable for its welfare to the true source of life, God. This covenantal vision recognises that humans and other life forms are part of one family, sisters and brothers in one community of interdependence. Although we have limited rights of use of other life forms, and also responsibilities of care and protection toward them, there is an ultimate thousness at the heart of every other living being, whether it be a great mountain lion or swaying bacteria, that declares its otherness from us' (1992:227). The sacramental tradition in her view also has important aspects to contribute. Both approaches, however, must lead to concrete political action. Ruether has also been quite active on promoting conversation between women from developed and from developing nations (1996).

Sallie McFague is by far the most prolific thinker in this area. She has published many articles and several books on the topic, beginning with early suggestions in her *Models of God* (1987), but explicating her argument in various ways in *The Body of God* (1993), in *Super, Natural Christians* (1997), in *Life Abundant*

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<sup>369</sup> For another early exposition, see Daly (in Birch et al., 1990, chapter 7). She advocates Schweitzer's sense of reverence for life as a useful overcoming of dualist perspectives, although she emphasises justice more heavily than he does.

<sup>370</sup> See also her essay 'A Tide in the Affairs of Women?' (in Hallman, 1994).

<sup>371</sup> 'Ecofeminism: The Challenge to Theology' (in Hessel and Ruether, 2000); 'Ecofeminism and Theology' (in Hallman, 1994); 'Ecofeminism: Symbolic and Social Connections of the Oppression of Women and the Domination of Nature' (in Adams, 1993, the same essay is also included in Part II of Barnes, 1994). Barnes' collection includes a response to Ruether's essay by Jay McDaniel who wonders whether her version of ecofeminism can include non-white cultures and animals. He also wonders about the role of God in ecofeminism.

(2000) and in her most recent *A New Climate for Theology* (2008).<sup>372</sup> In her earlier work, she claims that we must reconceive traditional theology for the contemporary situation and find new models for the divine and our relation to it. Thus she imagines the world as God's body in a panentheistic manner. This provides her with a more useful model of God for ecological action. In particular, she wants to highlight matter and body, which she finds have often been dismissed in the Western tradition despite its central doctrine of the incarnation: 'if Christianity is *the* incarnational religion, its treatment of embodiment, nature, and women is very strange indeed' (1993:14).<sup>373</sup> We must thus gain a new sense of space and location, of materiality and corporeality, and of God's intimate involvement in all of nature. God is the breath of the universe and the world is God's body. She suggests 'that we think of God metaphorically as the spirit that is the breath, the life, of the universe, a universe that comes from God and could be seen as the body of God' (144). This provides her with a theology 'for the oppressed' (200). In *Super, Natural Christians* she develops an ethic of loving nature that sees nature as a subject worthy of love in the same way as the tradition has exhorted us to love God and neighbour (1997:1). She contrasts what she calls the 'loving eye' to an exploitative vision of the 'arrogant eye'. The loving eye can begin to know nature as a subject instead of treating it as an object (modelled on Buber's notion of I-Thou relationships). We must thus learn to care for others, even non-human beings, and get close to the natural world in various ways. She carries this argument further in *Life Abundant* where she takes on economy by arguing for an ecologically oriented economic model that would allow all of life to flourish (especially expressed as concern for the poor and the planet) instead of the current neo-classical economic model of market capitalism and excessive consumption.<sup>374</sup> Drawing on her earlier work which envisions God as the world's body and as love, she develops a 'planetary theology' in order to counter the evil of the current economic model and work towards the renewal of creation. Jesus' message, in her view, is an invitation 'to imagine a different life, one centred in God and inclusive of all others—and then to live it. It is a revolutionary vision because it goes against the conventional hierarchies and dualisms (however these are understood in different cultures) and invites us to see the world in a radically new way—a way that has some similarities with the community model of ecological economics' (2000:172). She thinks of this as a counter-cultural mission with a different view of what constitutes 'abundant life': 'For middle-class North American Christians it will mean that the churches must call us to a sacrificial, cruciform lifestyle. We must begin to *live* differently. Having seen another possibility, another paradigm of abundance from the neo-classical economic

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<sup>372</sup> See also her essays 'Imaging a Theology of Nature: The World as God's Body' (in Birch et al., 1990:chapter 14); 'An Earthly Theological Agenda' (in Adams, 1993) and 'An Ecological Christology: Does Christianity Have It?' where she suggests that 'Jesus' ministry to the oppressed should be extended to nature' (in Hessel and Ruether, 2000:35). For interesting interactions with and critiques of her thought, see the collection *Theology That Matters: Ecology, Economy, and God*, edited by Darby Kathleen Ray (2006). All essays in the book engage with McFague's work, although not all address ecological questions as explicitly as she does.

<sup>373</sup> Her critique of American society is particularly strong: 'A society that allows thousands of homeless people to roam the streets with no protection for their bodies; that spends, on the average, more for the last week of a dying elderly person's hospital care than for the medical needs of the first ten years of a child's life; that refuses in international congresses to join other nations in protecting biodiversity and limiting chemicals that contribute to global warming: this society hates the body, human bodies, and all other animal and plant bodies that make up the body of our planet' (1993:24).

one, we must individually and collectively devise alternative ways of working, eating, cultivating land, transporting ourselves, educating our children, entertaining ourselves, even of worshipping God' (198).<sup>375</sup> In her most recent work she argues that the issue of climate change makes a 'new climate' for theology necessary, especially in regard to thinking about who God is and how humans are defined (2008). 'False, inappropriate, unhelpful, and dangerous notions of God and ourselves' are to be rejected (2). The rest of creation must be more fully included in theology, which has traditionally focused only on humans. God must be envisioned as a God who cares about all matter and all living creatures (55). She suggests that spirit and matter should not be thought in a dualistic, hierarchical fashion as this will encourage an escapist theology instead of an earth-affirming one. God loves the earth and we must become God's partners in taking care of creation (73). Again she addresses the relationship between religion and economics, suggesting that Christ's inclusive ministry can become a paradigm for our living in the world: 'One of the principal reasons for global warming denial is the realisation that 'everyone is invited' to the table of household Earth—including not just needy human beings, but the air, the water, the land, and each and every creature, not matter how small and seemingly insignificant. The terror implicit in this parable lies in its radical inclusivity—nothing, no one, is left out' (93). Everything is loved by God and the divine can be equated with 'whatever life or love there is, no matter how small' (173).

Another prominent feminist thinker, Elizabeth Johnson, has worked on integrating ecofeminist and liberation theologies, while remaining firmly committed to major tenets of the theological tradition (1993, 1996, 2008a, 2011).<sup>376</sup> She explores both christological and pneumatological resources for a new creation theology that would see humans as 'embedded as an intrinsic, interdependent part of the magnificence of this universe, not as lords of the manor but kin in the community of life, charged with being sisters and brothers, friends and lovers, mothers and fathers, priests and prophets, cocreators and children of the earth that is God's good creation' (in Hessel & Ruether, 2000:18). Johnson throughout insists that although 'the stunning world opened up by Big Bang cosmology and evolutionary biology points to the value of envisioning and relating to God not at the apex of a pyramid but within and around the emerging, struggling, living, and dying circle of life' (2008a:8), such a vision requires a trinitarian framework. She finds the doctrine of the Holy Spirit particularly useful for affirming God's presence in the world.<sup>377</sup> Johnson retrieves feminine imagery for the divine in order to picture this presence and activity.<sup>378</sup> Yet she relies not solely on the Spirit, but also

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<sup>374</sup> 'If one believes that 'the glory of God is all creatures fully alive,' then our current worldview and its lifestyle are wrong. It is more than that: it is sinful and evil, for it is contrary to God's will for creation' (2000:11).

<sup>375</sup> This criticism of market capitalism and consumerism is actually quite frequent in the literature and is often seen as the primary culprit both for environmental destruction and for eroding Christian belief (for an example of a more explicit engagement, see Coward & Maguire, 2000).

<sup>376</sup> See also the summary of ecological theology in her most recent work on contemporary theological frontiers (2008b:181-201). For an interesting engagement with her work that compares it to that of Greek Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas, see Fox (2001).

<sup>377</sup> 'The Creator Spirit is the unceasing, dynamic flow of loving power that sustains the world, brings forth life, weaves connections between all creatures, and repairs what gets damaged. Instead of sitting beyond the point of the pyramid of privilege, the divine Spirit encircles and indwells the universe' (2008a:9). She calls this a panentheistic model.

<sup>378</sup> She had already earlier worked on retrieving such feminine imagery in regard to God (1992) and in regard to Mary (2004) and the saints (1998).

explicates this vision in christological terms, likening the bloody reality of predation to the suffering on the cross.<sup>379</sup> Instead of seeing the randomness of the universe and of the evolutionary process as an obstacle to theology, she interprets it as the Spirit's 'acting here in a self-emptying, infinitely humble and generous way, a christic way, endowing the universe with the capacity to become itself' (2008a:16).<sup>380</sup> In her view this allows for a sacramental appreciation of the universe that no longer separates spiritual and material, a division that many feminist thinkers have been eager to overcome. Like McFague and many other ecofeminist thinkers, Johnson consistently emphasises the special plight of poor women, both in developed and in developing nations.

## 5. Eco-justice and environmental liberation theology

For most of its history, liberation theology has focused almost exclusively on human beings, especially on the poor. In fact, liberation theologians for a long time opposed any emphasis on environmental themes (e.g., at meetings of the World Council for Churches) because it was often dismissed as an elitist notion of the industrialised world, a further way of exploiting the poor with complete disregard of their basic needs for subsistence such as food and the land on which to grow it through whatever measures necessary. Yet increasingly thinkers in developing nations have acknowledged that climate change and other ecological disasters not only impact them as well, but actually affect the poor disproportionately, although most of the crisis was caused by the rich Western nations and their patterns of consumption. Thus, there is a growing realisation that action on behalf of the poor must include a strong ecological component. In fact, ecofeminist and liberation theologians are often now working together or at least taking thorough account of each other's thinking and writing, as it is poor women who bear the brunt of the ecological crisis and are the most at risk. In many nations poor and illiterate women have formed the grassroots organisations pushing for ecological change. The Chipko movement in India and the Greenbelt movement in Kenya are only the most prominent examples of many such locally led initiatives. Yet, liberation theologians have also engaged in significant thinking and writing in this area.

Sean McDonagh, Jesuit missionary to the Philippines, and Ingemar Hedström, a Swedish theologian in Costa Rica, were among the first to take on ecological themes in light of their particular situations, but they are now joined by many others, including womanist thinkers from African, Latin American, and Asian contexts. McDonagh writes from his position as an Irish Jesuit missionary in the Philippines and tries to raise awareness of ecological devastation in both places. He argues that we need a 'new theology' to deal with this situation and suggests incorporating insights from the native populations into this theology, which would also

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<sup>379</sup> 'The history of life is a story of suffering and death over millions of millennia. The temptation is to deny the violence and escape into a romantic view of the natural world. But there is another option, namely, to seek the Creator Spirit in the midst of pain... Christian theology interprets Jesus as the Word and Wisdom of God whose life, death, and resurrection reveal the character of the living God. What do we glimpse through this lens? A merciful love that knows no bounds, a compassion that enters into the depth of people's sin, suffering and terrifying death, to bring new life. An ecological vision gives theology warrant to cross the species line and extend this divine solidarity to all creatures' (2008a:11).



provide a new and more inclusive and respectful model for mission and evangelism (1986, 1990, 1995, 2004, 2006). David Hallman has brought together many of these thinkers in his collection *Ecotheology: Voices from North and South* (1994). This emphasis in ecological theology is called by various names, such as social or political ecology, environmental justice or eco-justice. All have in common that they approach ecological questions within the context of social and political structures that oppress the poor. Ingemar Hedström argues against the ‘hamburgerization’ of the forests of central America, using Costa Rica as an example. He emphasises that we need a balance between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism.<sup>381</sup> In most of his books he writes from a specifically Latin American perspective.

The most well-known liberation theologian dealing with ecological issues is probably Leonardo Boff. His edited collection *Ecology and Poverty* was one of the first books to bring the two perspectives together (1995a, also 1995b). He locates the source of the present crisis in the economic systems and development patterns of Western industrialised nations: ‘The whole of the earth has been reduced to natural capital, an accumulation of resources for growth and profit, first for those who have private ownership of these resources and then for the rest. And workers have been reduced to human capital. The present-day result is devastating. World-wide, social relationships destroy nature and exclude people. An unjust and humiliating attitude to the earth prevails. The earth in turn can no longer support the mechanisms of destruction and death implanted in it. Either we change course, or we are heading straight for great ecological calamities. The earth is crying out and the poor are crying out, both victims of both social and environmental injustice’ (1995a:xi).<sup>382</sup> The rest of the collection includes many different writers, mostly from Latin America, analysing this destructive economic system, highlighting poverty and injustice, and pointing to the disregard of indigenous knowledge about the balance of nature.<sup>383</sup> Boff summarises how liberation theology has evolved from an emphasis on the ‘option for the poor’ and the fight against poverty as primary sources for theological reflection to considering ecological concerns as an intricate part of this very thinking.<sup>384</sup> Jose Ramos Regidor argues that ‘for the poorest, the limitation of production and consumption is a question of survival... Christians of the base communities are becoming aware that our everyday style of life, our way of living and thinking, of

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<sup>380</sup> She insists that this is not a denial of omnipotence, but a ‘redefinition’: ‘The Spirit of God moves in the world with compassionate love that grants nature its own creativity and humans their own freedom, all the while companionship them through the terror of history toward a new future’ (ibid.).

<sup>381</sup> ‘Latin America and the Need for a Life-Liberating Theology’ (in Birch et al., 1990: chap. 8).

<sup>382</sup> He concludes by asking: ‘How can we obtain a socio-economic system that will produce a decent sufficiency for all, within a development model worked out with nature and not against it, and in which the idea of the common good will also involve the common environmental good, that of the air, seas and rivers, living beings, the whole environmental landscape? This is the great challenge raised by the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth’ (xi).

<sup>383</sup> For the latter point, see especially Berta G. Ribeiro’s article ‘Ecological consciousness in Amazonia: The Indigenous Experience’ where she argues that indigenous management of the Amazonian ecosystem ‘shows that they have a clear understanding of the habitat in which they live. They recognise ecozones associated with particular plants and animals, whose biology and behaviour they know in detail. Plants and animals, including invertebrates, are used by them for food, medicine and artefacts’ (ibid., 22).

<sup>384</sup> ‘Liberation theology starts specifically from the anti-reality, from the cry of the oppressed, from open wounds that have been bleeding for a long time ... It is from this human catastrophe that liberation theology starts when it meets the ecological question. In other words, it starts from social ecology, from the way human beings, the most complex beings in creation, relate to one another, and how they organize themselves in their relation to other beings in nature under regimes of great exploitation and cruel exclusion’ (ibid., 72, 74).

production, consumerism and waste is based on unjust relations which lead to the impoverishment of those who have been excluded, the degradation of the biosphere and discrimination against women.’ He calls this reality a ‘social, ecological and eco-social sin’ (ibid., 87, 90, 92).<sup>385</sup> Eduardo Gudynas outlines the central insights of social ecology, namely that the poorest live in the worst environments which are ‘free’ environments because they have little or no connection with the formal productive system and that the poor have developed some of their own techniques of dealing with this situation. These coping mechanisms often lead to further degradation of the environment. He contends that ‘both social poverty and environmental destruction are really symptoms of a deeper problem: a type of exploitative development, obsessed with efficiency and maximisation, which manipulate and dominates human beings and nature.’ Consequently, ‘the best environmental policy is to eradicate poverty’ (ibid., 110, 112). John Cobb similarly emphasises that justice and sustainability, social and ecological theology, must join together to be truly effective (1982:128). He carries this argument further in a later text, where he strongly criticises the current economic model and proposes alternative models that would be more just and less anthropocentric (1992).

The ‘Peace, Justice, and the Integrity of Creation’ Initiative (PJIC) of the World Council of Churches has also made significant contributions in this regard.<sup>386</sup> The emphasis on poverty and the call for justice are strong throughout the texts published or inspired by PJIC. Granberg-Michaelson quotes Gandhi to point out the unsustainability of first world industrialisation: ‘After Gandhi had led India to independence, he was asked if India would attain the same standard of living as Britain. He replied: “It took Britain half the resources of the planet to achieve its prosperity; how many planets will a country like India require?” It has taken the world four decades of failed attempts at development, and evidence of destruction from pushing against the limits of the earth’s inherent ecological capacities, to begin taking such statements with any seriousness’ (1992:17).<sup>387</sup> Jürgen Moltmann also takes up the themes of the WCC process in an early work (1989).<sup>388</sup> While here he deals primarily with the danger of nuclear holocaust, he argues for a theology of creation that is based on reciprocity and justice, appealing to Hildegard von Bingen and St. Francis as examples. In this context, he first mentions the biblical Sabbath as central for the salvation of nature, an idea he develops in much more detail in his famous Gifford lectures (1985). Ulrich Duchrow and Gerhard Liedke in their contribution to the WCC

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<sup>385</sup> Bastiaan Wielenga criticizes ‘the old paradigm of unlimited growth’ of the current economic system, including its ‘feverish consumerism’ in very similar terms (ibid., 97, 98).

<sup>386</sup> David Gosling reviews the WCC process for a British audience from 1983 to 1992, dealing with all the meetings and statements connected to the WCC process, leading up to (but not including) the Rio Earth Summit (1992). He also evaluates the progress of the movement in Britain (chapter 5). He often employs the language of liberation theology in this text. He also comments extensively on the Orthodox involvement in this process (which will be discussed separately below). Granberg-Michaelson takes this further by providing a detailed summary of the Rio Earth Summit and its conclusions (1992). See also his article ‘Creation in Ecumenical Theology’ (in Hallman, 1994).

<sup>387</sup> Daniel Maguire calls this policy of development an attitude of ‘green racism’ (in Hessel and Ruether, 2000). In her response to his essay Susan Power-Bratton argues for ‘environmental deacons’ that would advocate good environmental management, education, and medical services for the poor and for refugees and would in general work for ecological healing.

<sup>388</sup> This work precedes the Gifford lectures on creation, but was translated later. For a full engagement with and critique of ecological writings on the Sabbath, see my article ‘Sabbath and Eighth Day: On the Messianic Dimensions of Ecological Practices’ (2012).

process heavily draw on Moltmann's Sabbath theology in order to articulate a vision of *shalom* for all of creation and especially for the poor (1989).<sup>389</sup>

Many thinkers now speak of ecological theology in liberation terms and most reject the Western economic development model (see essays by Hallman, French, Cobb, Rasmussen, Miller-Travis, Somplatsky-Jarman, Grazer, and LeQuire, collected in Hessel & Ruether, 2000).<sup>390</sup> And increasingly feminist theologies and social or political theologies come together on this issue. Aruna Gnanadason observes close links between economy and ecology in India in regard to the situation of the poor and especially of women (in Hallman, 1994 and in Ruether, 1996: chap. 7). Ruether's collection of essays from women in Latin America, Asia, and Africa makes the same point in almost every contribution (1996).<sup>391</sup> Ecological theology is seen, by many, as a new liberation theology that extends the call for freedom and justice to non-human species.<sup>392</sup> It thus also has strongly ethical implications.

## 6. Environmental Ethics

Probably the strongest emphasis in environmental theological thinking is ethical. Most fundamentally, the recognition of present and impending environmental crises calls for action. And such action has most commonly been conceived in ethical terms. There is a wide range of writings that advocate ethical action especially. The Christian grounding for this action ranges from barely perceptible to very prominent, but in all cases it is of a primarily practical nature and does not explore theological themes more systematically. These ethical emphases differ widely from relatively moderate anthropocentric utilitarian stances to radical embrace of deep ecology or other ethical justifications. Several thinkers try to recover a stewardship model as sufficient to deal with the crisis (Attfield, 1991a, 1991b; Hall, 1990; Robinson, 2006) while others reject stewardship models entirely (Scott, 2003).<sup>393</sup> Nash's early text tries to develop an ethics of loving nature (1991, also in

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<sup>389</sup> The text is also very critical of the current economic model: 'While the "free" market economy apparently leads to growing violence, exploitation, and oppression, the countries of the two-thirds world have for a long time been demanding a new world economic order to remove underdevelopment and aim at allowing the poor countries a greater share in the power and wealth within an integrated world economic system' (1989:39).

<sup>390</sup> Primavesi also argues that the Northern notion of freedom, especially in regard to 'free markets' is an illusion: 'It is an illusion in the North who repeat the mantra of "freedom" on the understanding that it encourages personal freedom, creates jobs and prosperity and shores up democracy. For in fact all markets are managed—not so much by governments as by transnational corporations, banks and trading companies located in North America, Japan and western Europe—not to stimulate personal or communal development, but to maximise profit for their shareholders... In the South, the illusion of freedom is soon dispelled when its obverse, economic slavery, is imposed on the majority of the population by Northern capitalist structures. Freedom for those in the South would mean freedom from this slavery and the suffering it causes.' She goes on to outline the concrete effects of malnutrition, unemployment, and poverty on 'dependent, weak, helpless, anonymous, condemned and humiliated people' (2000:93-94). See also Cavanaugh (2008).

<sup>391</sup> See especially the essays by Mercedes Canas from El Salvador ('In Us Life Grows: An Ecofeminist Point of View'), Gladys Parentelli from Venezuela ('Latin America's Poor Women: Inherent Guardians of Life'), Vandana Shiva from India ('Let Us Survive: Women, Ecology and Development') and Sara C. Mvududu from Zimbabwe ('Revisiting Traditional Management of Indigenous Woodlands').

<sup>392</sup> For example, Elizabeth Breuilly and Freda Rajotte speak of it in these terms in their conclusion ('Treatment for the Earth's Sickness—The Church's Role') to the collection *Christianity and Ecology* (Breuilly & Palmer, 1992:chap. 8). Deane-Drummond comes to a similar conclusion in her *Handbook for Theology and Ecology* (1996; see especially chapter 9 'Future Directives for an Ecological Theology').

<sup>393</sup> He is also quite critical of deep ecology, ecofeminism, and social ecology, advocating instead a particular type of 'socialist ecology'.

Hessel & Ruether, 2000). Michael Northcott in his two books situates ethical thinking and action in a wider ecclesial context that draws on stories from Scripture and the tradition for developing a vision of ecological living that simultaneously rethinks concrete issues such as energy, climate economics, emissions, light and agriculture (1996, 2007). Fern argues that we need not reject anthropocentrism, but can develop an ethics that includes nature, God and humanity together (2002). According to him, humans are ‘the most vulnerable aspect of creation, the linchpin of success and failure. In our will and well-being hangs the fate of nature’ and thus we have a special responsibility for nature and must live in fellowship with it and care for it (2002:167).<sup>394</sup> Other thinkers are very critical of anthropocentric stances (e.g. Cowdin in Hessel & Ruether, 2000). More recently ethical approaches have been developed by Rasmussen (1998), Deane-Drummond (2004), Hart (2006), and Jenkins (2008). Both Rasmussen and Hart are fairly communitarian in their approaches, while Deane-Drummond and Jenkins draw on various traditional theological approaches for a more inclusive ethical stance. There are also many collections that bring together a wide variety of ethically oriented articles (Krueger, 1987; Irwin & Pellegrino, 1994; Birch et al., 2000; Hessel & Ruether, 2000; Spencer & White, 2007). In fact, even many of the more systematic treatments, whether those of process thought, ecofeminism or ecojustice, often end in an appeal to ethical action, albeit conceived somewhat differently depending on their respective emphases.<sup>395</sup>

One important and increasingly vocal group (especially in Britain) within this ethical emphasis consists of writers who focus on animal rights. Andrew Linzey has written several books on this subject (1989, 1994, 1997, 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2009), while Regan, Birch, McDaniel and Adams also argue vigorously for a Christian vegetarianism and other protections for the species closest to us (collected in Pinches & McDaniel, 1993). Lukas Vischer in a work called *Living with the Animals*, co-written with Charles Birch, develops an ethic of communal living based on the Bible (1997). The violence of creation (especially that of humans) is attributed to the fall, yet the very nature of animals (as predators) cannot be attributed to human (sinful) actions in his view. He portrays Jesus as being at peace with animals in the desert as was also true of many saints. Thus, Vischer concludes that humans must practise restraint in regard to creation and respect the other animals. Birch provides the biological arguments to support this view by arguing for the inherent value of animals and for their similarity to humans. In another text Birch formulates a ‘Christian obligation for the liberation of nature’ as biocentric. He argues that animals have intrinsic value and that the churches must develop an ethic that emphasises continuity between humans and animals (in Birch et al., 1990:chap. 5). Tom Regan also argues for animal rights, drawing on the Scriptures to argue that God creates animals for their own sake not for human use (ibid., chap. 6). Robert Wennberg provides an extensive argument that animals should have at least some moral standing for Christians, although he is far less radical than Regan and Birch (Wennberg, 2003). He is particularly critical of factory farming and painful animal

<sup>394</sup> See also Louke van Wensveen, ‘Christian Ecological Virtue Ethics: Transforming a Tradition’ (in Hessel and Ruether, 2000).

<sup>395</sup> In philosophical environmental ethics, ecofeminism and social or political ecology (environmental justice/eco-justice) are now often considered a more radical part of the same discipline, together with utilitarian and de-ontological approaches, biocentrism and ecocentrism.

research, but does think of humans as superior and contends that they have a special moral status that makes killing humans more serious than killing animals. Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough have recently edited a collection that brings together the most fully formulated of these theologies on behalf of animals, ‘our closest kin’ (2009).<sup>396</sup> It includes historical (Thomistic and Lutheran), systematic (incarnation, *imago dei*), hermeneutical (more philosophically oriented), and specifically ethical approaches. A final section focuses on ecological questions in regard to animals.

## 7. Systematic Approaches

One might say, then, that with the possible exception of process theology, most engagements with the ecological crises have been in areas of practice or application.<sup>397</sup> Yet, more recently there have also been some attempts to think through fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith (christology, soteriology, eschatology, ecclesiology, etc.) in light of the contemporary concern with ecology. The earliest such engagements focused primarily on the doctrine of creation which lends itself most obviously to engagement with nature (Carmody, 1983; Joranson & Butigan, 1984; Moltmann, 1985; Altner, 1974, 1989; Link, 1991; more recently Wirzba, 2003; Albertson & King, 2010). Denis Edwards has consistently tried to grapple with evolutionary and ecological challenges to the question of God (1999), the human person (1992), christology (1995), and pneumatology (2004). He brings insights from these various areas together in his most recent book written for a more popular audience (2006). The topic of anthropology in light of ecological challenges is explored most fully by Ernst Conradie (2005a). Deane-Drummond brings insights from animal ethology to a thorough examination of the doctrine of christology in light of the consistent emphasis on the role of wisdom in her overall work (2009). Following and building on Edwards, Elizabeth Johnson has recently articulated a notion of ‘deep incarnation’ (2010). Moltmann’s works on christology (1990) and eschatology (1996, 2004) are also informed by a more cosmic vision. Pneumatology is examined by Johnson (1993, 2008a, 2008b) and especially by Mark Wallace, although his notion of the Spirit as the world’s body abandons many traditional theological understandings (2002, 2005). Both Wallace and Southgate explore questions of theodicy (Southgate, 2005, 2008). Many of these thinkers also engage questions of eschatology (besides Moltmann also Clark, 1993; Ellis, 2002; Keller, 1996; Polkinghorne & Welkers, 2000; Polkinghorne, 2002; Wilkinson, 2010). [The thesis draws on many of these texts explicitly, thus they are not summarised in more detail here.]

## 8. Orthodox positions on ecology

Some Orthodox scholars have indeed engaged with environmental or ecological issues. Several thinkers join Western writers in defending Christianity from the charge of causing the ecological crisis. This is particularly true of Issa Khalil who engages White’s essay (and similar charges) in great detail (1978:193-211; 1990:19-36). He appeals to the Orthodox notion of humans as microcosm of creation, to its sacramentalism and to asceticism as more positive ecological aspects of the tradition. The most prominent Orthodox

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<sup>396</sup> The collection includes essays arguing for animal rights from a wide variety of perspectives.

spokesperson for the environment is without a doubt His All Holiness Bartholomew I, the Patriarch of Constantinople, who has hosted countless conferences and symposia on environmental themes and received several prestigious awards for his activity on behalf of ecological questions. While Bartholomew's many speeches and addresses in a wide variety of contexts have certainly contributed to raising awareness of environmental issues in the Orthodox world (and in the Western world about Orthodoxy), they are not usually very extensive theological discussions.<sup>397</sup> Other Orthodox thinkers, especially those involved in the World Council of Churches, have gone further, although even these discussions tend to take the form of brief articles instead of deeper theological explorations (Limouris, 1990).<sup>398</sup> Several recurrent themes can, however, be detected and can be taken to be an essential part of an emerging Orthodox ecological theology. These are the notion of humans as microcosm or priests of creation,<sup>400</sup> the idea of cosmic redemption, and the appeal to asceticism as providing a new paradigm of ecological (ethical) living. In fact, similar to the Western writings on the topic most treatments refer very briefly to theological issues in order to focus much more fully on ethical implications. Thus most writing takes on a decidedly practical and ethical tenor, instead of a more systematic theological one. Each of these thematic emphases will be summarised briefly here. Most are addressed in much more detail in the thesis itself.

For John Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon, the notion of human priesthood of creation is absolutely central. He argues in several places that priesthood is a more ecologically useful notion than stewardship (1989, 1990, 2003). Humans are the highest part of evolution and their specific task is to offer the creation to God (in Breuilly & Palmer, 1992:58, 61).<sup>401</sup> Several other thinkers stress this idea as well. Thus, although Paulos Mar Gregorios admits that all of creation is to be deified, he argues that this happens through the human vocation to act as priests of creation (1978). Kallistos Ware also strongly emphasises the importance of this idea. He speaks of humans as the 'high priests' of creation: 'A living icon of the living God, man can do two things which none of the animals can do: first, he can reshape and alter the world, giving to it fresh significance and purpose; and secondly, he can bless and praise God for the world. He is both king and high priest of creation. His vocation is not just to live in the world, accepting things as he finds

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<sup>397</sup> Clark is quite critical of this and addresses more methodological questions (1993).

<sup>398</sup> These were collected by John Chryssavgis in several volumes (especially 2003 and 2012, but there are also briefer references in 2010 and 2011). A somewhat more developed (though still quite brief) treatment can be found in chapter 6 of *Encountering the Mystery* (2008:89-119). For a summary of Bartholomew's ecological theology, see my article (2010a).

<sup>399</sup> A further collection of articles based on a conference (entitled 'For the Transfiguration of Nature') appeared in *Epiphany Journal*, Issue 10.3 (1990). Another collection edited by Bruce Foltz and John Chryssavgis (also based on a conference) is forthcoming with Fordham University press.

<sup>400</sup> The notion of the human as microcosm of creation is also taken up by the three Orthodox contributions to the collection on panentheism (Clayton & Peacocke, 2004). Ware explores the Palamite idea of the divine energies which is able to affirm that God is fully present in the cosmos although always also completely transcendent to it, Alexei Nesteruk argues that the creation participates in God through the incarnation and the ascended Logos, Louth summarises the cosmic vision of Saint Maximos to argue that the *logoi* of creation convey the meaning of the cosmos which humans are able to discern in virtue of their position as microcosm of creation.

<sup>401</sup> Martin Palmer appropriates this notion of priesthood extensively in his 'The Ecological Crisis and Creation Theology' (in Brümmer, 1991:141-144). Theodore Hiebert, on the other hand, is quite critical of it (in Hessel and Ruether, 2000:144). He interprets the priestly model as a celebration of technology as domination of nature and opts for an agrarian model instead.

them, but also to make use of the world, to develop and transfigure it; and not only that, but to see the world as God's gift and to offer this divine gift back to the Giver in thanksgiving. In relation to his physical environment, man's role is both creative and eucharistic' (1971:155-156). In this context, he explicates this priesthood in terms of the eucharistic offering of gifts, in human creativity in iconography and art, and in secular scientific inquiry, including technology (163). This notion of human priesthood of creation as an expression of our obligation to offer the world to God or to articulate its praise has become very common in contemporary Orthodox writing (e.g., Staniloae, 1969; Harakas in Limouris, 1990:70-82). The notion of priesthood also often implies the task of human transfiguration of nature. Thus, in a journal issue with that title devoted to ecological concerns, a summary statement argues that we must redeem creation and save the earth, that transfiguring the earth is our primary purpose (1990:72-74).

The notion of cosmic redemption is also fairly common.<sup>402</sup> Gregorios sees the redemption of all of creation as a fundamental principle of Orthodox faith: 'Humanity is redeemed *with* the created order, not *from* it' (in Birch et al., 1990:41). John Chrysavgis similarly emphasises the incarnation's affirmation of the material. The environment must be understood as 'sacrament of the Spirit' (in Hessel & Ruether, 2000:86, 91).<sup>403</sup> K. M. George also mentions the idea of cosmic redemption and interprets it in terms of hospitality and participation (in Limouris, 1990:45-55). Patriarch Bartholomew speaks of the sacramentality of creation which requires 'an appropriate veneration' of God's creation (2008:90).<sup>404</sup> Most Orthodox thinkers simply seem to take this notion for granted, although it is the one most often mentioned by Western environmental writers in regard to the Orthodox tradition.

Harakas interprets the idea of humans as microcosm in more ethical terms. It implies responsibility for creation and calls for justice and peace (in Limouris, 1990:73-79; 1990:46-61; 1992). Vigen Guroian in a book on ethics explores an ecological ethics of 'blessing' grounded in the liturgy (1994:chap. 7). Often ethical implications are drawn from examples of asceticism (e.g., Rogich, 1990:62-71). Milton Efthimiou strongly stresses the need for a life-affirming asceticism that would combat the evils of consumerism: 'Ecological sin not only has to do with the degradation of the earth through deforestation and industrial waste and burning fossil fuels. The saints of the church teach us that nature is polluted and destroyed because of our basic human weakness, our basic human nature, which is not separate from the earth's nature since we are all part of God's creation. The lives of the saints teach us that God's creation is destroyed by the avarice, greed, gluttony, pride and all the negative passions of humans' (in Hallman, 1994:94). Patriarch Bartholomew particularly emphasises the ethical dimension of the topic and sees it as the special task of the church to move believers to

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<sup>402</sup> The point is made repeatedly in 'Orthodox Perspectives on Creation', which provides a summary of the consultation on the JPIC initiative of the WCC (Limouris, 1990: especially 1-15). It also explicitly addresses issues of justice and peace.

<sup>403</sup> He also mentions the idea of humans as microcosm and priests of creation. He treats the affirmation of the material, especially in iconography, in much more detail in his *Beyond the Shattered Image* (1999).

<sup>404</sup> Later he says 'if the earth is sacred, then our relationship with the natural environment is mystical or sacramental; that is to say, it contains the seed and trace of God. ... From this fundamental belief in the sacredness and beauty of all creation, the Orthodox Church articulates its crucial concept of cosmic transfiguration' (2008: 92).

action.<sup>405</sup> He is deeply critical of environmental destruction, calling such acts mortal sins and ‘an unforgivable insult to the uncreated God’ (2003:130).<sup>406</sup> Furthermore, he often connects this to larger questions of justice and poverty, thus stressing a theme central to much liberation theology.<sup>407</sup> In many places, Bartholomew does link this to an ascetic attitude, which he contrasts to the attitude inculcated by consumerism (2003:219-220, 289, 306-307; 2008:100-103). Several other Orthodox thinkers point to asceticism and its emphasis on simplicity as an important part of an Eastern response to the ecological crisis (Theokritoff, 1989:38 and 2009:93-116; Ware, 2005:13; Khalil, 1978:210).

By far the most developed Orthodox treatment of the subject is Elizabeth Theokritoff’s recent book *Living in God’s Creation: Orthodox Perspectives on Ecology*, written for a more popular audience (2009).<sup>408</sup> Theokritoff provides an overall ‘ecological vision’, informed by reflections on Orthodox theology, on asceticism and monastic practice, and on worship and sacraments. She articulates an ‘Orthodox ecology’, which both recognises our responsibility for the current situation and formulates a vision that might motivate believers to act on behalf of creation. Drawing on many Patristic writings she stresses that all of creation has value and that the entire creation reveals God’s glory and mystery. She articulates a cosmology grounded in the fathers which recognises the ‘spiritual potential’ of matter and sees God and the world intricately involved with each other, while still holding on to the notion of God’s utter transcendence and distinctiveness from the world (60-64). Creation in God’s image refers both to the idea of humans as microcosm of creation and of care for nature, using the notion of the *imago dei* in beneficial not destructive terms (74-75). Although the fathers believed that the fall affected the material creation, redemption will similarly be cosmic in scope.<sup>409</sup> She reviews the ascetic tradition and clarifies what may seem like its negative attitude to the body, arguing that this refers to battling sinful passions not the body as such. Ultimately the body is affirmed as capable of transfiguration by grace (98-103). Asceticism can help us to detach from an unhealthy obsession with things and to live more ‘lightly on the earth’ (104-115).<sup>410</sup> Theokritoff finds that the Orthodox liturgy and its sacramental life both provide a cosmology that takes full account of creation and integrates it fully into a life

<sup>405</sup> He calls it ‘the fundamental role of religion’ that it ‘can inspire the behaviour of every individual; it also plays a strong role in influencing thought and actions of groups and mass movements’ (2003:264). In several addresses he speaks of the church providing ‘good morale’ or ‘belief in the moral necessity of these measures, and upholding the moral justification of the entire effort’ (ibid.).

<sup>406</sup> He uses quite strong language of sin against creation throughout his speeches. In *Encountering the Mystery*, he says emphatically: ‘It is my conviction that every act of pollution or destruction of the natural environment is an offence against God as Creator’ (2008:116).

<sup>407</sup> For example, he cites injustice (especially in regard to inequity between north and south) as a problem at ‘the basis of the ecological crisis’, but also makes very clear that ‘justice extends even beyond one’s fellow human beings to the entire creation’ (2003:193-94). In *Encountering the Mystery*, he points out that ‘the ecological problem of pollution is invariably connected to the social problem of poverty ; and so all ecological activity is ultimately measured and properly judged by its impact and effect upon the poor’ (2008: 95). See also the section on ‘Poverty and Inequality’ (2008:108-111).

<sup>408</sup> This is not to say that the book is not carefully researched (which it is), but it is not written for a specifically academic audience and that informs its style and manner of presentation.

<sup>409</sup> In a later chapter, she explores the implications of this in terms of how saints are reported to relate to their environment. In them the image of God is restored and thus they are able to have a redemptive effect on the whole cosmos, especially in their relationships to animals (2009:117-154).

<sup>410</sup> She emphasises restraint and self-limitation and uses fasting as a prominent example.



restored by grace.<sup>411</sup> She concludes with considering contemporary Orthodox approaches to these questions. Thus, Theokritoff outlines, at least to some extent, an alternative vision of life, a more ecological way to live, informed by the Orthodox tradition as she has summarised it.

## 9. Conclusion

The thesis is primarily concerned to articulate an Eastern Orthodox ecological theology. The Orthodox positions just examined suggest that the ideas of humans as microcosm and as ‘priests of creation’ must be addressed by an Orthodox ecological theology and that it will also need to say something about asceticism and cosmic redemption. Yet from the summary of the Western positions and emphases, several important insights emerge that are also relevant to a more Eastern approach. Based on the insights provided by the available literature, it seems that any ecological theology must:

- a) take contemporary science seriously. Yet, as the Orthodox thinkers who have already interacted with it point out, such a conversation with science cannot result in wholesale abandonment of central Christian doctrines, such as the Trinity, the incarnation, or God’s difference from creation (as long as such divine transcendence does not deny God’s intimate involvement in and with the world).
- b) be careful not to re-institute value-laden dualisms or succumb to any equation of nature or the earth with the feminine (for Orthodox theology this implies especial care in any talk about the Theotokos and her relation to creation). It also implies a much greater consciousness of and attention to the theological language employed to speak of the divine, the human, and the earth.
- c) include a concern for the poor, not making an artificial distinction between care for the earth and care for disadvantaged peoples (especially women and children in developing nations). Social justice is inextricably linked to justice for the earth.
- d) involve a serious concern with ethical action, including conduct toward animals. Theological reflection cannot be separated from concrete choices about how to conduct one’s life.
- e) engage central theological doctrines instead of treating it as a topic on the margins of theology only concerned with ‘application’.

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<sup>411</sup> See chapters 4 and 5 (2009:155-210). As this is also a main theme of this thesis, the chapters are explored in more detail within the thesis itself.

## APPENDIX II

### LITURGICAL THEOLOGY: LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of literature in the field of liturgical theology is loosely organised around the themes set forth in the section on methodology in the introduction to the thesis, on the one hand as a way of structuring the literature available in this field and on the other hand to show even more fully that the methodology employed in the thesis is appropriate (because also applicable to liturgical theology more generally).<sup>412</sup>

#### 1. Liturgy as primary theology

The word ‘leitourgia’ means ‘common work’ or ‘work of the people’ and was originally used to refer to such public activities as paying taxes and other ‘public works’ in the Greco-Roman empire.<sup>413</sup> In the Christian tradition it came to designate the work of the Christian community, primarily—though not exclusively—in church.<sup>414</sup> Today it is often used to refer to liturgical texts used in Christian ecclesial gatherings, occasionally as referring to the sacraments, or, more loosely, to the activity of worship in all its facets. In the widest sense it can designate any communal Christian experience.<sup>415</sup> ‘Liturgical theology’ as a subdiscipline of theology (often categorised under ‘practical’ or ‘applied’ theology) is a fairly recent endeavour, emerging only in the past 50-60 years, often linked to the ‘liturgical reform movement’ to a large extent leading up to and in the wake of Vatican II.<sup>416</sup> The Eastern Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann also had much to do with its emergence as an independent discipline. Today a distinction is often made between *liturgics* as a more strictly scientific discipline concerned with the earliest emergence of liturgical

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<sup>412</sup> I do not include again a review of Ricoeur’s biblical hermeneutics. A fuller version of this including such a review and arguing that Ricoeur’s hermeneutics is an appropriate method for liturgical theology is forthcoming in *Worship*. That version, however, includes significantly fewer bibliographical notes which are here provided for the review of the available literature.

<sup>413</sup> For a thorough review of the origin of the term and its appropriation, see Irwin (1994, chapter 1). I.H. Dalamais explains that ‘as used originally in the Greek cities, “liturgy” could mean any “public service”, but especially services that were costly and were accepted as done in the name of the city because they were linked to its most vital interests. In a culture permeated by religious values (as most of the traditional cultures were), “liturgy” thus understood was predicated first and foremost of actions expressing the city’s relations to the world of divine powers on which it acknowledged itself to be dependent. “Liturgy” referred, therefore, not to cultic actions of individuals or private groups but only to those of the organised community, that is, the entire people, who realised that they shared a single destiny and a collective memory. In other words, liturgy belonged to what has sometimes been called a “perfect [or: complete] society”. This is why the name can and even ought to be reserved (as it is in official documents) for the exercise of a worship that is public in the fullest sense, that is, a worship actually offered in the name of the community, which acknowledges it as its own’ (in Martimort, 1987:233).

<sup>414</sup> John Baldovin argues convincingly that much of the church’s liturgy in urban centres was of a public nature and took place in the streets. Thus, liturgy is not solely confined to the architectural space of the church building (1987).

<sup>415</sup> Most liturgical scholars draw a distinction between public rite and private devotion. See, for example, Keith Pecklers, S.J., who devotes a chapter to private devotion or ‘popular religion’ (not all of it private or individual) in his book on liturgy (2003:139-161).

<sup>416</sup> The four-volume series edited by A.G. Martimort is a good example of this (1986-87). For a brief review of the twentieth-century liturgical movement, see Pecklers (2003:91-166). For a fuller treatment, see Fenwick & Spinks (1995; also Madden, 1992). Toverell re-examines the liturgical reforms that came out of Vatican II quite critically especially in light of ritual studies, which suggest that mystery is an essential part of worship and that a liturgy that aims primarily at comprehensibility may fail to engage the imagination of its participants (2000).

rites as examined especially in early texts<sup>417</sup> and *liturgical theology* as a theological reflection upon such texts. Schmemann draws a somewhat similar distinction at the very beginning of his *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* when he outlines ‘the task and method of liturgical theology’ and distinguishes it from ‘liturgics’ or ‘liturgical study’, which is concerned with ‘how worship is to be carried out according to the rules’, instead of ‘what is done in worship’, i.e., its meaning (1986:9). James White contends that neither group sufficiently engages the other: ‘Unfortunately, most liturgical theology tends to be historically naive, just as much liturgical history may be theologically unsophisticated. Most liturgical theologies are based on a single period of a single tradition. And frequently it is an idealised version of that tradition’ (in Anderson & Morrill, 1998:57). David Fagerberg claims that there are ‘four understandings of the relationship between liturgy and theology’: theology *of* worship (which focuses on worship as response to God but says little about liturgical rite), theology *from* worship (which is primarily interested in doctrine but tries to root it in the liturgy), liturgical theology (theology as found in the structure and performance of the rite) and the study of liturgical theology (2004:11-12, revised version of 1992).<sup>418</sup> He gives examples of each approach.

This sense of liturgical theology as primary theology is encapsulated by the phrase *lex orandi, lex credendi* (loosely translated as ‘the law of worship determines the law of belief’).<sup>419</sup> Aidan Kavanagh and David Fagerberg make this distinction the most forcefully, although it has become a common assertion in

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<sup>417</sup> Historical liturgical studies are primarily devoted to uncovering evidence for and analysing early Christian liturgical texts and observances. Such scholars are concerned with the development of Christian Sunday celebrations, the emergence of the festal and sanctoral cycle, the divergences in observances in various geographical and cultural areas, as well as the emergence and organisation of certain parts of the rites. Talley (1986/1991) and Winkler (1997) have done particularly important research on the emergence of the Paschal and the nativity cycle, Taft on the emergence of the Byzantine rite and its various elements (1995) and the emergence of the liturgy of the hours (1986), Brock (2006) and Winkler (1997) on Syrian Christianity and Varghese on West Syrian liturgy (2004). James White collects some useful resources and early documents (1992; see also Deiss, 1979). This research is primarily historical and descriptive (although occasionally comments are made about contemporary liturgical reform in light of particular evidence from the past). Bradshaw carefully summarises what we know about the origins of Christian worship and frequently warns of drawing conclusions too confidently and too hastily (2002). In a different text he edits several essays on the emergence of Eucharistic celebration and its liturgical prayers (1997). Some literature deals specifically with the emergence of the Christian Sunday celebration and its possible links with the Sabbath (Carson, 1982; Doering, 1999; McKay, 1994) or with the Jewish roots of worship more generally (Fisher, 1990; Bradshaw & Hoffman, 1991). Comings focuses on the emergence of the liturgical year in Cappadocia at the time of Basil, the two Gregories, Amphilochius, and Asterius of Amasea, using their writings to establish her insights (2005). Baldovin examines the ‘urban character’ of Christian worship by looking at the development of stationary liturgy in Jerusalem, Rome and Constantinople (1987). He contends that the varieties of stationary liturgy function as a means to claim the public space for Christian faith. Stationary liturgy became a kind of ‘urban language’ (267). Susan White examines how technology impacted Christian worship at various points in its history, for example in regard to questions of the calendar and the clock (1994). Johnson brings together papers assessing the current status of historical research on many of these questions, especially the festal and sanctoral cycle (2000). Mazza crosses this disciplinary divide between historical study and liturgical theology to a certain extent by developing a liturgical theology based on the early mystagogical texts (1989).

<sup>418</sup> In the more recent edition, he also make a further distinction between what he calls a ‘thin’ and ‘thick’ sense of liturgy: ‘liturgy in its thin sense is an expression of how we see God; liturgy in its thick sense is an expression of how God sees us. Temple decorum and ritual protocol is liturgy only in its thin sense; in its thick sense, liturgy is theological and ascetical’ (2004:9). The emphasis on asceticism as essential to liturgy is much stronger in the revised edition.

<sup>419</sup> This is a shortened version of Prosper of Aquitaine’s longer statement *lex supplicandi legem statuat credendi*. This phrase is repeated and examined by many liturgical thinkers and in most introductions to liturgical theology. Schmemann also employs the phrase repeatedly. For a particularly useful and thorough introduction see Irwin (1994, chapter 1).

many writers.<sup>420</sup> Kavanagh emphasises that to see liturgy as primary theology ‘is very radical. It implies that worship conceived broadly is what gives rise to theological reflection, rather than the other way around’ (1984:3). Liturgical practices shape the life of faith and this faith of the community informs and shapes the liturgical texts and actions. It ‘is about the possibility that liturgical worship, an endeavour both worldly and ecclesial, is itself fundamental to and constitutive of the faithful community and also of the ways in which that community reflects upon itself theologically’ (22).<sup>421</sup> Kavanagh uses colourful language to express why we have difficulty with the notion that liturgy might be more primary than doctrine: ‘We today can hardly be expected to understand how liturgy could be considered seriously as the basic condition for doing theology, even less as the law which founds or constitutes the law of belief, so long as we perceive liturgical worship as a pastel endeavour shrunk to only forty-five minutes and consisting of some organ music, a choral offering, a few lines of scripture, a short talk on religion, a collection, and perhaps a quick consumption of disks or pellets and a beverage’ (60). Kavanagh objects to a theology that merely employs liturgy as a quarry for arguments and maintains that instead liturgy reveals the discourse of an ecclesial society (82, 85).<sup>422</sup> He concludes that ‘*Lex supplicandi legem statuat credendi* says something about the deepest structure and purpose of Christian worship. It also suggests a method of analytical procedure which the secondary theologian ignores to the Church’s peril. For the liturgy of faithful Christians is the primary theological act of the Church itself, and the ways in which this act carries on its proper discourse are above all canonical in structure and content, and eschatological in intent’ (150).

Graham Hughes is less interested in whether liturgy is primary or secondary discourse, but makes the meaning of worship the central concern in his work. He draws both on Ricoeur and insights from semiotics for his analysis of how worship can become meaningful, formulating his central question as follows: ‘What sort of meaning is this which some people construct and in which other people participate which we call a liturgical event? Or, to put the question in a slightly different way, what would a theory of meaning look like which could guide or facilitate the achievement of this kind of meaning? Or, to have yet a third shot at it, is it

<sup>420</sup> It has even become the revised title of Fagerberg’s book on liturgical theology (2004). For his discussion of ‘primary theology’ see chapter 1 of the early edition and chapters 1 and 2 of the revised version.

<sup>421</sup> He explains that ‘it would be foolish not to recognise that placing sacramental discourse prior to, above, and in a role which subordinates theology in the modern academic sense is a difficult if not incomprehensible move for many people. We generally think of the two sorts of discourse the other way around, theology coming first and sacramental discourse very much later as a possibly implied excursus of the former. Sacramental discourse in fact is often thought of as theological adiaphora best practised by those with a taste for banners, ceremonial, and arts and crafts. It is regarded as an academically less than disciplined swamp in which Anglican high churchmen, Orthodox bishops, and many if not all Roman Catholics and others are hopelessly mired’ (46).

<sup>422</sup> Again, he draws the contrasts in vivid language: ‘Unlike these [systematic theologies], however, it [liturgy] is *proletarian* in the sense that it is not done by academic elites; it is *communitarian* in the sense that it is not undertaken by the scholar alone in his study; and it is *quotidian* in the sense that it is not accomplished occasionally but regularly throughout the daily, weekly, and yearly round of the assembly’s life of public worship’ (89). Instead, or maybe precisely for that reason, ‘secondary theology, even at its best, seems to approach the liturgical worship of Christians with a certain condescension and as not much more than a possible *locus theologicus* whose existence is to serve secondary theology and whose work must therefore be closely monitored’ (90). He therefore concludes: ‘Liturgics, which is the discipline a liturgiologist practices, is thus not a performing art, nor it is a species of something seminary catalogues often call “practical theology”. It is a major discipline, similar to biblical exegesis or church history or doctrinal theology, particularly in those institutions which devote themselves to preparing people for ministry to assemblies of faith’ (148).

possible to give some account of the ways in which the meanings of worship are organised and transmitted by those who lead and are appropriated by those who participate in a worship service?’ (2003:11). He argues that in order for a worship event to have meaning it must ‘make sense’ in some way and be theologically comprehensible (31). For Hughes this implies a genuine encounter with the contemporary postmodern world. Meaning is created in the circular engagement of traditional rite and postmodern worshipper. Consequently, ‘convictions need to be held on an open palm rather than in clenched grip; our work must be undertaken in a seriously experimental way, as a wager for meaning rather than senselessness, and for the *particular* wager suggested by the liturgical signs themselves’. The person who engages in worship must ‘*yield* to the promise and the invitation proposed in the liturgy... in proposal and in acceptance, then, is the meaning of worship constructed’ (302).

Kavanagh also emphasises that meaning is no easy matter: ‘Thickening meaning and then incrementing that meaning with style is no easy task, and it does not happen by accident. It is a knowledgeable accomplishment of the highest order’ (1984:48). He finds such meaning becomes possible through the practice of Christian worship as it engages with faith and the reciprocal interchange between the two. Rite emerges precisely through this interaction between liturgical acts and faith (100). This circular arrangement is also stressed by Gordon Lathrop who juxtaposes a circular relationship between two aspects of liturgy (such as praise and beseeching, teaching and bath, pascha and year, etc.) in each of his chapters on liturgical practice and argues that the meaning of liturgy emerges from this paradoxical pattern (1993/1998). There is thus reciprocal interaction between the liturgy and the community.<sup>423</sup> Understanding arises from this circular relationship.

It is claimed by many liturgical theologians, then, that liturgy can and indeed must serve as a source for theology and that it is primary theology in contrast to systematic or speculative theology, which reflects on doctrine that is secondary to and dependent upon it. Liturgy and faith exhibit an essentially circular structure and continually inform each other.<sup>424</sup> Furthermore, it is now widely accepted that the early developments of the creeds and other doctrinal statements are firmly grounded in worship practices and concrete soteriological experience of the community, as Robert Taft indicates: ‘To borrow a term from the biblical scholars, the liturgy is the ongoing *Sitz im Leben* of Christ’s saving pattern in every age, and what we do in the liturgy is exactly what the New Testament itself did with Christ: it applied him and what he was and is to the present.

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<sup>423</sup> Some ecclesiological studies also touch on the nature of liturgy. Limouris (the Orthodox spokesperson for Orthodox involvement in the WCC process especially on faith & order questions) collects several essays on this question, including some Orthodox contributions (1986). Some make connections between liturgy and homiletics. Slenczka examines early sources in order to examine how preachers set forth theological doctrines within the liturgy (2000). Cunningham & Allen (1998), Mühlenberg & Oort (1994) and Blowers et al. (2002) examine patristic homiletics, Dunn-Wilson does so in a much more general and sweeping fashion (2005).

<sup>424</sup> Nichols expresses this in even more Ricoeurian language: ‘Liturgical hermeneutics is able to add to this discussion the conviction that the worshippers bring an initial *faith* in the world being proposed to their participation. In the presence of faith, the world of the rite is expressed both in the “first-” and in the “second-level denotation” of the liturgical act. The structural and linguistic modes of proposal confront the people at the first level with the official statements of the faith. But through this first level of presentation, the worshippers reach the second level which is their projected inheritance. The liturgical rite proposes a way of appropriating the world of the Kingdom, which is only valid if the participants believe in the Kingdom’ (1994:84).

For the *Sitz im Leben* of the Gospels is the historical setting not of the original event, but of its telling during the early years of the primitive Church. Do not both New Testament and liturgy tell us this holy history again and again as a perpetual anamnesis?’ (1993:336). The creeds emerge in the context of liturgical settings and the liturgical worship did often influence doctrinal developments heavily (including Trinitarian formulations in the Arian controversies and the development of the Theotokos formulation and other Marian dogma).<sup>425</sup> Another aspect of this circular ‘wager’ of meaning is the liturgical arrangement itself which is inherently circular, whether in its arrangement of the daily hours of prayer, of the weekly cycle beginning from and culminating in the celebration of the resurrection, or most obviously, the yearly cycle of feasts and fasts.<sup>426</sup>

## 2. Liturgy as shaping a world

Ricoeur’s concept of the world of the text is particularly useful for the analysis of liturgy. Liturgical practice opens a world in quite physical fashion. Ecclesial architecture is profoundly shaped and inspired by liturgy. The sacred space is arranged so that liturgical worship can take place and achieve its highest expression.<sup>427</sup> As one enters the church and its sanctuary, one enters into a world that provides access to the divine in particular ways. A whole universe is opened by the sacred space.<sup>428</sup> The world of the believer merges (at least to some extent) with the world of the texts chanted during the liturgy and is shaped by the particular space and time where the texts are heard and experienced through the liturgical practice. The world of the texts becomes our own, as we enter within them and appropriate them through chanting, singing, or speaking them and allowing our bodies to move within them.<sup>429</sup>

Don Saliers expresses this as follow: ‘Worship characterises human beings who recall and give expression to a story about the world. The language of this story teaches us to describe all creatures in the world as God’s. Worship forms and conveys the awareness of God and the orders of creation and history’ (in Anderson & Morrill, 1998:17). Hughes calls this process sign-production and sign-reception. The worshippers receive and interpret the signs produced by others. Receiving the signs ‘is “a world seen differently”, a world in which “we might project our ownmost possibilities”, a “sanctuary of meaning”, perhaps indeed “the Kingdom of God”’ (2003:197). He contends that the fusion of meaning that occurs between the production of signs and their reception and interpretation introduces something richer: ‘Now it is just this *surplus*, I am

<sup>425</sup> Yet the reverse is also true to some extent: For example, Baldovin shows in his examination of stationary practice in Jerusalem, Rome, and Constantinople, how the stationary character of the liturgy influenced liturgy more generally even when it was not stationary (1987:166, 214, 253, 263).

<sup>426</sup> For a theological interpretation of the meaning of this circularity, see Schmemmann (1966:116-170).

<sup>427</sup> See also some interesting comments on liturgical space and the ‘bodily’ nature of worship in Morrill (1999). For a discussion of sacred space see Jean Corbon (1988, chapter 14); Philip Pfaffreicher (1997, chapter 6); James White (2000, chapter 3); David Brown (2004); John Inge (2003); Susan White, ‘The Theology of Sacred Space’ (in Brown & Loades, 1995).

<sup>428</sup> Nichols argues in regard to space: ‘The fundamental hermeneutic assumption in the case of both the community and the individual is that the Kingdom is at once the ground of liturgical action, and its eschatological destination. This manifests itself in its simplest form as a function of space and architecture, when the congregation presents itself to the possibility of the Kingdom by moving out of the secular space, into the place set aside for worship’ (1994:53).

<sup>429</sup> The movement into this world is particularly evident in the liturgies for baptism, for becoming a catechumen, for chrismation, for marriage, for ordination, which all designate an important change also in the real lives of those for whom they are performed.

wanting to say, that is that which is generated in the fusion of meanings brought by the sign's interpreter with those proposed by its producer. "Something more" comes into the world than had been known previously by each' (209).<sup>430</sup> In opening a world, liturgy also transforms the things of this world.<sup>431</sup>

Nichols also applies Ricoeur's 'proposal of a world' to liturgy.<sup>432</sup> She spells this out as follows: 'Implicit in Ricoeur's choice of the Kingdom is the belief that the ground of religious discourse and the infinite are one and the same, and that encountering the Kingdom entails first of all assuming the Kingdom. We now enter an interpretative circle that denies any one point of origin for the practise of liturgy. The matter of whether worshippers continue to participate in liturgical action because they believe in the textually enshrined promise of the Kingdom, or whether they gain glimpses of the Kingdom as a consequence of their belief in the validity of the act of worship is not a case for decision, but for an act of faith. Liturgical hermeneutics is responsible not only for finding an adequate way of approaching this unique form of discourse, but also for seeking an ever more precise means of discussing liturgical faith' (1994:37). She explicates this world of the kingdom in several respects, mentioning daily offices and readings, but analysing in particular the different Anglican rites for Eucharist and burial.<sup>433</sup> Throughout, she stresses how the various rites either allow believers to enter within them or at times fail to provide a world that they might inhabit.<sup>434</sup> Nichols argues in conclusion that 'this is surely the essence of a hermeneutical understanding of liturgy. Worshippers enter into ritual action equipped with a certain pre-understanding of the Faith, a grasp of the

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<sup>430</sup> Hughes uses Ricoeurian language to talk about the world experienced by the worshipper: 'If, on the other hand, what I have called the iconicity, the indexicality and the traditional (symbolic) dimensions of the significations have been successful, she will have seen her world, her self, her engagements and her possibilities opened to a new way of viewing all these. She will have been brought to the edge of what we can think and must thereafter only imagine; she will have apprehended that such was the intentional ministry of those who devised and executed the words and actions; and she will have grasped that God, Christianly understood, was the innermost subject matter of all these. Such, we may say, are the meanings of worship' (2003:216).

<sup>431</sup> 'But liturgy does not *leave* these things as we encounter them in their ordinariness. In many and various ways we subject them to what have been called "ritualising strategies": the ministerial party does not exactly *walk*, it processes; baptism is a form of *washing* but unlike any other lustration the candidate will undergo; the Eucharist is a *meal*, but one in which the bread is broken and given with a prayer and wine is consumed from a handsome cup; and so on, at pretty well every point. Whatever else it is, worship may be described as a richly complex series of intensifications of ordinariness' (2003:295).

<sup>432</sup> She seems to assume, however, that for Ricoeur this is an automatic process in which the world is always open and is appropriated without risk. For example, she says, 'the danger in the apparent orderliness of the narrative form, is that it can give rise to facile assumptions about a seamless progression from the text's proposal of a world, through distanciation by writing, to appropriation. This process demands no risk... Nevertheless, the text-reader relationship holds open the possibility that the reader will assume that what the text proposes, and what he or she appropriates, is in fact the truth' (1994:31). Later she claims even more forcefully that 'Ricoeur's position assumes that no human experience is so intractably resistant to outside influences that it cannot respond to the world proposed by the text' and that 'Ricoeur asserts the power of the text to make its proposal against all odds. In other words, appropriation is a foolproof procedure. This is, of course, to idealise the text' (189). This is clearly false, as risk is always involved for Ricoeur and appropriation is never easy or straightforward, certainly not 'foolproof'.

<sup>433</sup> As one concrete example, here her description of what happens at one point within the Eucharist rite: 'As the priest turns from the eastward celebrating position to face the congregation, the people are both literally and figuratively confronted with their own unworthiness to receive the sacrament. The moment is therefore rich in dramatic tension, for this is a final opportunity to lay claim to God's forgiveness before receiving the body and blood of Christ through faith' (71).

<sup>434</sup> For example, she argues in regard to the funeral rites: 'In this way, they dispose of the basic responsibility in liturgical hermeneutics, which is that the rite should propose a world which can be appropriated by the worshippers' (188). She

reasons for performing the rite, and a sense of the liturgical community as part of, yet also distinct from, the secular community. Once the worshippers have entered the liturgical process, however, it can act upon them to produce an event of understanding that is not confined by the structure of pre-understanding which they bring with them. As Richard Bernstein has written, “the meaning of a text or of tradition is only realised through the happening (*pathos*) of understanding” (257).

Although other thinkers do not use Ricoeurian terminology, the idea that liturgy opens a world and calls us to transformation within it, is central to much liturgical theology. Schmemmann explicates this in terms of the eschatological dimension of the liturgy. He presents the liturgy primarily as a sort of entrance, where the entire cosmos is carried into the presence of God. Yet, not only does the Church ascend into heaven, but the kingdom also begins to become present within the liturgy. The beginning of the *eschaton* dawns within the celebration of the Eucharist: ‘The reconciliation, the forgiveness, the power of life—all this has its purpose and fulfilment in this new state of being, this new style of life which is Eucharist, the only real life of creation with God and in God, the only true relationship between God and the world. It is indeed the *preface* to the world to come, the door into the Kingdom: and this we confess and proclaim when, speaking of the Kingdom *which is to come*, we affirm that God *has already endowed us with it*. This future has been given to us in the past that it may constitute the very *present*, the life itself, now, of the Church’ (1973:39).<sup>435</sup> This idea that the kingdom becomes present within the liturgy and that liturgy constitutes entrance into the kingdom is central to Schmemmann’s work. This eschatological emphasis in the liturgy is especially strong in the East, but is also increasingly being explored by some contemporary Western thinkers, such as Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI (2000:48-50, 60-61). In fact, most liturgical theologians now assume as a presupposition that liturgy is both anamnestic and eschatological in character.<sup>436</sup>

### 3. The language of liturgy

The notion of limit or excess to speak of what happens in liturgy is quite common in the literature. Hughes speaks of a clash ‘between the meanings proposed in the liturgy and the meanings proposed by the world to which the worshipper returns’ (2003:42). He finds that a ‘sense of boundary’ or limit is precisely the most meaningful way of connecting the contemporary experience with the meaning of the liturgy: ‘Liturgical meaning is effected at the extremity of what we can manage or comprehend as human beings. Worship is a journey “to the edge of chaos”. It is something liminal, standing on the borderline of finitude and the infinite. It is thus that I shall argue that liturgical theology is equally *cognisable* from within universal human

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goes on to say of a different rite: ‘The world that they appropriate, as the biblical tradition rises up out of history to meet them, is therefore a world which has already appropriated them’ (248).

<sup>435</sup> In a different context he laments: ‘But the individual believer, entering the church, does not feel he is a participant and celebrant of worship, does not know that in this act of worship he, along with the others who together with him are constituting the Church, is called to express the Church as new life and to be transformed again into a member of the Church’ (1986:30). Bruce T. Morrill appropriates some of this in his work (2000, see especially the chapter on Schmemmann).

<sup>436</sup> For example, Johnson’s collection of studies on the emergence of the liturgical year states this assumption in the very title of the volume (*Between Memory and Hope*) and in the introduction claims that ‘all liturgy occurs precisely at the intersection of these two poles’ (2000:xi).



experience and, simultaneously, attends to the *inalienable alterity* by which we are confronted when we dare or are driven to approach this place of radical marginality' (257). Worship must evoke 'the awareness of the wonder and the dread of exposure to forces not of our own contriving' (275). Hughes contends that because liturgy thus hovers 'at the boundary of the knowable', the congregation must realise 'that all its images of God are constructed' and live within this tension (297).<sup>437</sup> Nichols similarly uses Ricoeurian language to speak of 'the illogical logic of religious language that allows the extraordinary to break through the ordinary' (1994:79). Throughout her study of liturgical hermeneutics she speaks of liturgy in terms of a 'threshold experience'.<sup>438</sup> Threshold positions invite us into the kingdom: 'A threshold position in liturgical experience does not limit human action within the confines of this world. On the contrary, it is the vantage point from which worshippers can take up their stance towards the Kingdom. This effectively switches the poles, so that the thresholds of mortal experience are considered in the light of their implications for eternal life' (93). Throughout her discussion she points to such liturgical thresholds in a variety of rites and practises.

Kavanagh also plays heavily with the language of limit and chaos. He defines the growth of liturgy as 'a function of adjustment to deep change caused in the assembly by its being brought regularly to the brink of chaos in the presence of the living God' (1984:74), which is precisely why it is primary theology. Lathrop throughout his text employs the notion of juxtaposition between 'old' and 'new' thus forming what he calls a 'breaking' or speaking the 'wrong words'.<sup>439</sup> The rest of his book is structured in terms of this juxtaposition of conflicting meanings and 'wrong words'.<sup>440</sup> He reflects on the implications of this for today: 'Shall we be done with the language of sacrifice altogether? Shall we find other metaphors expressive of the inversion and transformation of our own religio-political culture? Or, shall we give the answer of critical classicism? That is,

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<sup>437</sup> 'On the one hand, obviously, all the strategies adopted are here intentional: worship is an advertent journey to the edge. On the other hand, the effects achieved are (when the means are successful) much closer to those of *inadvertent* limit experiences: in contrast to the measured degrees of exposure of most wilful limit experiences, there is here (again, when the signs 'work') the sense of being wholly overwhelmed, of powerlessness and awe, of wonder and joy, of thankful self-giving and rich benefaction' (298).

<sup>438</sup> 'My founding premise is that, through the cognitive propositions of the Faith, worshippers find themselves placed in the prospect of the Kingdom in what I have defined as *threshold* positions. From these positions, the individuals who make up the congregation are empowered to make their personal appropriation, in faith, of the promises set out in the rite. ... As a threshold language, liturgical language performs two functions. In a purely pragmatic way, it separates the world from the Church by adapting the language of ordinary secular exchange to a recognisable, but also recognisably different liturgical purpose. In an eschatological way, it both separates and unites the liturgical community and the Kingdom of God by its traits of repeatability and futurity. Worshipping communities perform the eucharist regularly as an act of remembrance, until Christ's coming again, but all their hopes and all the promises of the rite are grammatically invested with a future value. In practise, it is almost impossible to isolate the two processes. Any analysis that beings with an emphasis on one will find itself caught up in the other' (87, 92).

<sup>439</sup> 'To inquire into the structure of the *ordo* is to inquire about the way meaning occurs in Christian worship. The thesis here operative is this: Meaning occurs through structure, by one thing set next to another in the shape of the liturgy, evokes and replicates the deep structure of biblical language, the use of the old to say the new by means of juxtaposition' (Lathrop, 1998:33).

<sup>440</sup> To give one example: 'Such a pattern [of prayer] corresponds to a Jewish conception of time. Now, before God, we remember the past deeds of God that hold the world in order and existence; but now we also beg God to remember the current need of the world, to gather our future into the promise of God's own future. According to such a pattern there are past and future, truth and promise, God's word and the continuing need of the poor, God's beginning and God's end, and our present moment stands at the meeting place of each of these pairs' (1998:56). In an analysis of Justin's use of the words *pempein/ananapempein*, he insists that we 'easily miss the critical wrongness of these words. Indeed, the words of

given the importance of this language in the tradition and the perdurance to our own day of the human interest in holy gift and holy violence as a compelling link with deity, we should maintain the language, even increase its use, but do so with a fierce insistence on breaking and converting its power. We should recover the sense of the sacrificial metaphor and use this metaphor in the manner of biblical rhetoric. Such is the answer of this book' (1998:155-156). The liturgy always deals in opposites and is not afraid of ambiguities.<sup>441</sup> He expresses this in terms of polyphony: 'The meeting's one centre, its one purpose, can only be spoken in this diversity. The liturgy is not a single voice, in authority; telling us the single truth of God. It is many voices in dialogue with a single voice. It is all of us singing, each one of us eating and drinking' (220). Writings on liturgical theology recognise and even emphasise the superlative and pluriform character of its language in its attempt to give an account of liminal experience.

It is also acknowledged by many liturgical theologians that the language of liturgy is heavily characterised by symbolism and often appeals to myth in the sense of primordial structures of meaning. Schmemmann is quite critical of a certain kind of 'symbolic' interpretation of the liturgy, which sees all parts of the rite as a historical representation of aspects of Christ's life. He contends that 'symbol here is reduced to an illustration whose purpose can be termed pedagogic or educational' (in Fisch, 1990:116). Such symbolic reading of the liturgy is to be rejected because it shows a 'radical discrepancy' between the liturgy itself and its symbolic interpretation. Instead, we must recover an earlier notion of symbolism which is of the kind explained to neophytes in early catechetical instructions (119). Such an interpretation has as its purpose 'to explain the *mysterion*, the spiritual meaning, the spiritual reality, hidden, yet present behind the visible signs and rites of the liturgy' (120). The meaning of symbol thus changes over time and becomes increasingly separated from the central mystery of the faith. Schmemmann concludes: 'The liturgy, both in its totality and in each of its rites or actions, is symbol. The symbol, however, not of this or that particular event or person, but precisely of the whole *mysterion* as its revelation and saving grace' (123).<sup>442</sup> What Schmemmann rejects is an understanding of symbol simply in terms of illustration or analogy. He seeks to recover instead a meaning for symbol as a reality so rich that it cannot be encapsulated in simple language and thus requires the symbolic language of myth.

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that particular texts seem intended to avoid any metaphorical character that lingers in the offering terminology of the Roman canon and to say directly that Christians do give offerings to God' (155).

<sup>441</sup> 'The Christian liturgy, in contrast, embraces contraries: life and death, thanksgiving and beseeching, this community and the wide world, the order expressed here and the disorder and chaos we call by name, the strength of these signs and the insignificance of ritual, one text next to another text that is in a very different voice. In Christian use this ambiguity is not simply a general devotion to contrary principles as a way to truth. For the Christian, in fact, the balance is in favour of life and thanksgiving and the hope for order, but only in such a way that all things are remembered, all sorrows comforted, all wounds assuaged. The mystery of God is the mystery of life conjoined with death for the sake of life. The name of this mystery revealed among us is Jesus Christ. The contraries of the liturgy are for the sake of speaking that mystery. It is by the presence of these contraries in the juxtapositions of the *ordo* that Christians avoid the false alternatives so easily proposed to us today' (176).

<sup>442</sup> 'Through its symbols the liturgy gives us the *theoria*: the knowledge and the contemplation of these saving mysteries, just as, on another level of the same symbolism, the liturgy re-presents, makes present and active, the ascension of the human soul to God and communion with Him' (123). Thus Schmemmann wants to speak of an 'eschatological symbolism' (125).

Lathrop speaks even more explicitly of liturgical myth in terms of a ‘broken’ myth in line with the language of juxtaposition he employs throughout: ‘In a broken myth the terms of the myth and its power to evoke our own experience of the world remain, but the coherent language of the myth is seen as insufficient and its power to hold and create as equivocal. The myth is both true and at the same time wrong, capable of truth only by reference to a new thing, beyond its own terms. Such a break is present in the deep intention of the words and ritual practices of the liturgy: the old is maintained; yet, by means of juxtaposition and metaphor, the old is made to speak the new’ (1998:27). Saliers also comments on the symbolic language of liturgy: ‘To focus solely on the verbal or surface language of liturgical prayer is to neglect the very way that the language gains meaning and depth. Liturgical language is radically dependent upon what is not verbal for meaning and significance. This is not surprising in light of our explorations of the modes of prayer and experience’ (1994:140). He employs Victor Turner’s work to identify three aspects of the ritual process: ‘(1) multivocality, or a fusion of many levels of meaning; (2) the power to unify several disparate referents and experiences; and (3) the ability to accumulate meanings around both affective and morally normative values’. In regard to symbols he says: ‘On the one hand, symbols can be spoken of as objects, gestures, utterances, or complex actions. On the other hand, ritual symbols are never merely things. This is because “things” like light, water, oil, or bread are already, for the Christian tradition, embedded in a history of shared social life. Such objects are not themselves “symbolic” by virtue of using them to express our experience. Rather, only by being vulnerable to and learning to participate in the shared life toward which these symbols point is “experience of the symbol” possible’ (143). Although Hughes does not explicitly employ the language of symbol or myth, most of his treatment is concerned with signs and their meaning in worship.<sup>443</sup>

Irwin devotes a whole chapter to the symbol in worship (1994: chapter 4). He defines symbols as ‘elements from creation and elements which are the result of human productivity’. Creation thus receives a symbolic content within the liturgy: ‘These texts serve to indicate that part of the fundamental anthropological and theological foundation upon which the act of liturgy is based—in our terminology this is part of liturgy’s *context*—is the use of creation and symbolic interaction through which means the divine is disclosed and faith in the divine is shaped and renewed. The following discussion of two characteristics of the use of creation in worship help to exemplify this premise and to specify part of the *context* for liturgy: times for celebration and motivation for celebration’ (132). He illustrates the ‘time’ of celebration in terms of the significance of light

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<sup>443</sup> ‘A worship service, and then each of its constituent parts, is a synthetic whole. It is not that iconic signs stand adjacent to indexical signs which then yield to symbolic signs. Each of the actions, utterances, artifacts and spatial arrangements carries or combines within it all of these semiotic dimensions. But we have from the outset seen that there is meaning resident within the *texts* being used; there is meaning, or its absence, in the *performance* of the leaders; there is meaning effected by the worship *space*, its textiles, furnishings and arrangements; there is meaning in the *music*, vocalised or instrumental; there is meaning in the *ordering of the events* one to another; there is meaning which consists in an *experience of the divine*, of God’s otherness, of God’s immediacy, of God’s splendour and God’s loving-kindness; there is meaning in the fact that those who undertake this action are an *assembly*, a gathered body of people. Not least there is meaning which enables participants to re-enter the familiar world better able to live in that world coherently and constructively. This near-infinite range in kinds of meaning are all desiderated of worship; the worship will be felt to be disappointing or less than adequate when any one of them is absent’ (Hughes, 2003:182).

and darkness and the use of candles,<sup>444</sup> while the motivation is exemplified by the Eucharistic elements (158). Taft similarly uses ‘symbol’ to refer to the parts of creation used in the liturgy, but finds that they gain a richer meaning by being employed within the liturgy. Liturgy itself serves as a symbol in the sense that it expresses who we are and calls us to a fuller reality (1993:341). Emphasising the connection between symbol and life, he says: ‘In short, the touchstone of our liturgy is whether or not it is being lived out in our lives. Is the symbolic moment symbolising what we really are? Is our shared celebration of life a sign that we truly live in this way?’ (343).<sup>445</sup> David Powers also examines ‘the symbolic nature of liturgy’ (1984). He claims that we are in a symbolic crisis where the traditional symbols no longer speak to us and thus calls for a radical overhaul for how worship is conducted. He reviews some of the ways in which symbols and the language of myth have shaped worship in the past and suggests that new metaphors are needed (132). Gail Ramshaw has focused on the language of liturgy in much of her work. She examines liturgical language as a kind of ‘sacred speech’ that is metaphorical and rhetorical (1986). Such metaphors are employed for God, but also in regard to time, place, objects, and the assembly. She also examines how such ‘sacred speech’ might be taught to the next generation (1986:chapter 10). Her treatment thus has a practical (didactic) dimension.

#### 4. Liturgy and action

It is becoming increasingly clear to liturgical theologians that liturgy is action and not merely text. Liturgy is performed, not just read or chanted. Hughes, for example, argues that ‘the “meaning” of the event consisted as much in the performance of the act as in the markings on the page—even if we agree that the one could not have come into being without the other’ (2003:38). Nichols again takes up Ricoeur explicitly by formulating the connection between liturgical text and its performance in terms of the hermeneutic circle.<sup>446</sup> Liturgical hermeneutics, in her view, allows for a greater emphasis on the performative aspect of liturgy. She insists that liturgy is always both text and performance. Saliers also emphasises that understanding the theological implications of liturgy relies as much on examining how it was practised as it does on looking at the texts themselves: ‘The central issue is not “what are the theological truths contained and stated in the texts?” but “what is being said and done in the liturgical action with the use of these words?” This latter question cannot be answered by recounting the earliest version of the liturgical texts under study, or by analysing the language of the prayers as such’. Instead, he suggests, ‘the actual performance of the language is

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<sup>444</sup> ‘The very use of candles is significant. These are commodities whose purpose is to shed light and, by their nature to be totally consumed in the act of being burnt. The purpose of the candle is to be burned, consumed. It is a complete oblation. Sacrificial overtones of complete self-offering are thus operative because of the nature of the candle as symbol’ (153).

<sup>445</sup> ‘This is what Christian life, our true liturgy, is all about. Our common worship is a living metaphor of this same saving reality, not only representing and re-presenting it to us constantly in symbol to evoke our responses in faith and deed, but actively effecting it in us through the work of the Holy Spirit, in order to build up the Body of Christ into a new temple and liturgy and priesthood in which offerer and offered are one’ (344).

<sup>446</sup> ‘The circle I am talking about is a hermeneutic circle, in which the relationship between the liturgical text and its performance ceases to be a competition for priority, and becomes mutually sustaining. The whole endeavour, then, devolves on the very simple point that liturgy must be recognised as simultaneously text and performance. The approach to interpreting liturgy which it develops under the name of liturgical hermeneutics, strives to be faithful to this condition’ (Nichols, 1994:15).

done by a community. Thus the “hermeneutics” of the assembly’s social, economic, and political/ethical energies and patterns are central. ... Preoccupation with reformed texts and rubrics neglects the most difficult challenge: to uncover the intersection of human pathos with the symbolic power and range of liturgical rites authentically celebrated’ (1994:141). Irwin also stresses this: ‘In trying to underscore the priority of the *lex orandi* in doing theology many of the authors reviewed here have tended to emphasise liturgical *texts*. The positive value of this emphasis is that it gives due weight to texts which have been crafted over centuries of Church life and prayer and which are essential to the ritual enactment of liturgy. The negative side, however, is the danger of using liturgical texts as “proof texts” and of textual fundamentalism. Liturgy is far more than texts. Liturgy is an enacted communal symbolic event with a number of constitutive elements and means of communication, including, but not restricted to, texts.’ The rest of his treatment deals with what he calls ‘an elusive task’, namely ‘how to develop liturgical theology based on the multifaceted *event* called liturgy’ (1994:32). Throughout his book he emphasises the relationship between text and context or the circumstances within which liturgy occurs as an event.<sup>447</sup>

Furthermore, the implication of liturgy for wider action is increasingly expressed by adding the term *lex vivendi* or *lex agendi* to the more common phrase *lex orandi, lex credendi*.<sup>448</sup> Saliers develops the link between liturgy and ethics in an early article under that title, later reprinted in various volumes. He laments that ‘there has to date been a paucity of dialogue between liturgical studies and ethics, even though it seems obvious that there are significant links between liturgical life, the confession of faith, and the concrete works which flow from these’ and argues that ‘*The relations between liturgy and ethics are most adequately formulated by specifying how certain affections and virtues are formed and expressed in the modalities of communal prayer and ritual action. These modalities of prayer enter into the formation of the self in community*’ (in Anderson & Morrill, 1998:16, 17; emphasis his). In this article and in other works he tries to spell out the implications of liturgy for a life of action shaped by the liturgy. Frank Senn is also interested in how the action of the people influences the liturgy itself, thus how action informs text and its practice: ‘My aim in this work, however, is to venture off the beaten path of documentary studies to explore the impact of the people on the performance of their ‘public work,’ by means of which they signified their hopes and aspirations, expressed their devotion to God, and acted out their human relationships in the presence of the Judge of all’ (2006:7).<sup>449</sup> There are also several texts that specifically try to address questions of justice via liturgical study (Searle, 1980; Empereur & Kiesling, 1990; Hughes & Francis, 1991; Morrill, 2000; Rashkover, 2006; Scott, 2008; Baldovin, 1991 and Baldovin in Johnson, 2000:429-444).

Only two sources consider ecological questions specifically (Mick, 1997; Stewart, 2011), although considerations of space and nature are occasionally mentioned in other studies (some essays in McMichael,

<sup>447</sup> Hoffman undertakes a similar project in regard to Jewish liturgy (1987).

<sup>448</sup> For example, these are used as the three major sections [*Lex orandi, Lex credendi, Lex vivendi*] of a work honouring H. Boone Porter (McMichael, 1993).

<sup>449</sup> The rest of the book is a narrative examination of how the various social and political situations influenced the development and understanding of liturgy. Some works in liturgical theology also draw on sociology or attempt to establish a relationship with it (Flanagan, 1991; Stringer, 1999, 2005).

1993; Lathrop, 2003). Mick focuses on the sacramental character of life and tries to develop links between worship and ecological awareness in very general ways especially by pointing to the incarnation as a paradigm for 'embodied worship'. He concludes with some practical suggestions for using natural elements in worship and for appropriate occasions in the (Western) liturgical calendar for raising ecological issues (i.e., in sermons). Stewart's very brief book on worship and ecology is written from a Lutheran perspective for a popular audience. It considers the symbolism of water in baptism, nature symbolism during the liturgical year, the relationship between food and the Eucharist, and care for the body and connection with the earth in death.

## 5. Conclusion

Liturgical theology, then, is a rich and diverse field of study. Unfortunately, despite Schmemmann's early contributions to the discipline, there are very few Orthodox liturgical theologians in the English-speaking world. Research on particular aspects of the 'Byzantine rite' is indeed being conducted in Greece and Russia, but there seems to be little contemporary discussion of liturgical *theology* in the rich sense Schmemmann gave to it. Although there are a couple more ecumenically oriented studies (e.g., Best & Heller, 2004), Western liturgical theologians obviously usually focus primarily on their own respective liturgical traditions, which are often of little concrete relevance to the study of Eastern liturgy. The only consistent Eastern examination of liturgy occurs at the annual conferences on liturgical studies at St. Sergius, the Orthodox seminary in Paris (thus its publications are all in French) and use has been made of the articles published in the annual volumes based on the conferences as appropriate. Unfortunately, the feasts have not been an explicit concern of these conferences to this point. Due to this overall lack of available sources in Orthodox liturgical theology, I have drawn less on particular studies in liturgical theology than worked in its general spirit, attempting to provide a distinctly Orthodox contribution to the field.

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The bibliography has been divided into topical sections in accordance with the respective fields informing the thesis. Some of these distinctions are superficial or ambivalent, thus several Orthodox sources could be included either as secondary sources on Patristic texts or as ‘contemporary Orthodox’ texts. They are listed in the way in which they have been used within the thesis. Each section also lists related sources that have been employed but do not strictly speaking belong into the category (thus some Western authors who write on a contemporary Orthodox figure have been listed under ‘contemporary Orthodox sources’ and some non-theological environmental texts under ‘ecological theology’).

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